Fall 2004

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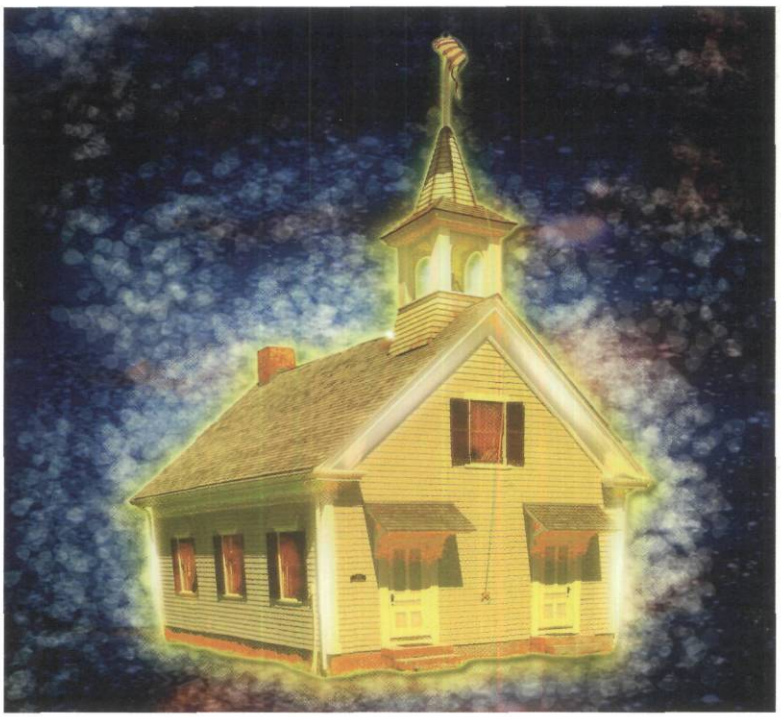
A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH

Small Wonders

In schooling, bigger is not necessarily better

CHRISTOPHER BERRY



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Vouchers in D.C. and Colorado, The New Tutoring Marketplace, Reflections on Brown, *Technology's Promise, The Achievement Gap, What Happened to Detracking?*

CONTRIBUTORS: ROLAND FRYER, HOWARD FULLER, LANCE FUSARELLI, SIOBHAN GORMAN, MAUREEN HALLINAN, FREDERICK HESS, SPENCER HSU, STEVEN LEVITT, LOWELL MONKE, WARREN SIMMONS, MARK WARNER

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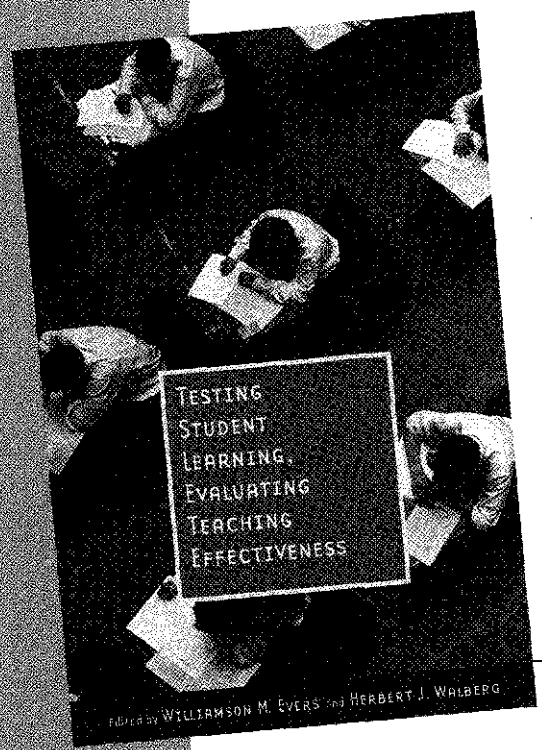

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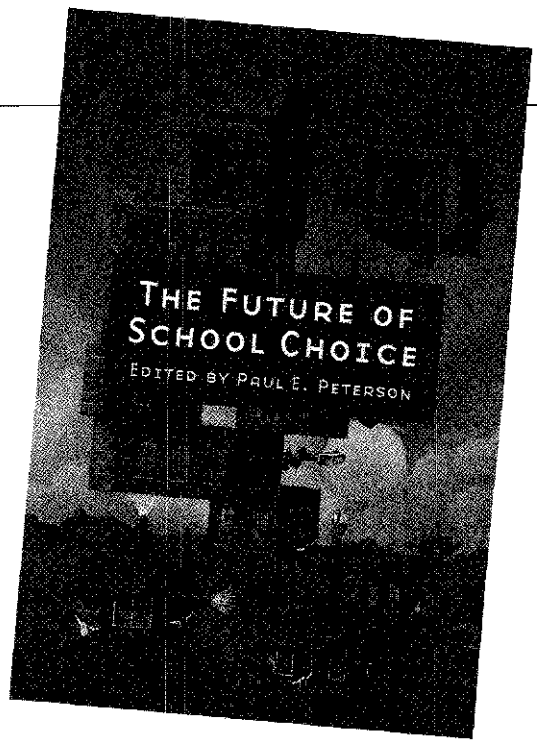

The Future of School Choice

In the most anticipated decision of its 2002 term, the Supreme Court ruled, in the case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris,* that the school voucher program in Cleveland, Ohio, did not violate the Constitution's ban on the "establishment" of religion. Opponents of vouchers were predictably disappointed but pledged to fight on.

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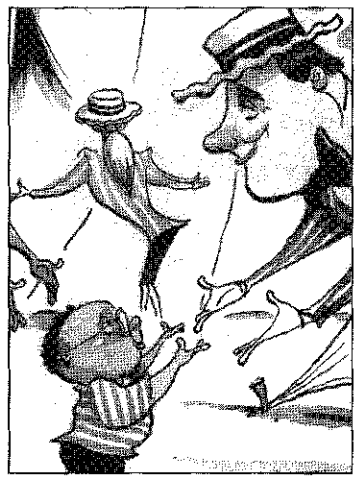

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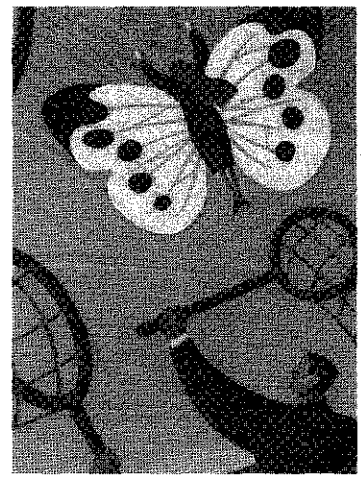

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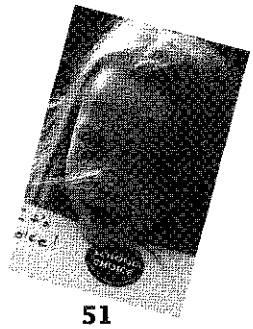
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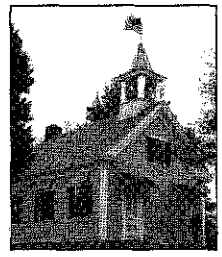
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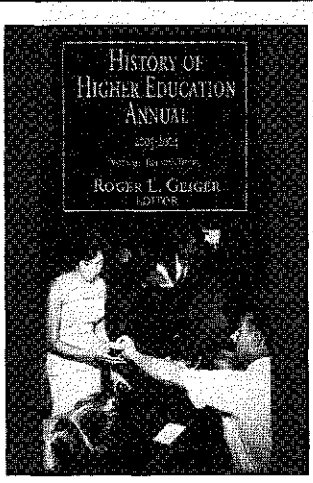
Roger L. Geiger on Higher Education



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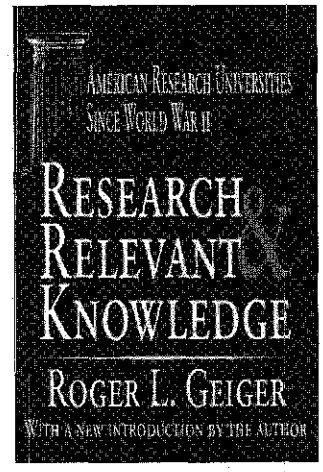
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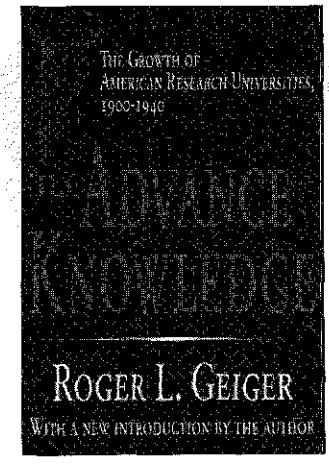

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The *Brown* Irony

Racial progress eventually came to pass—everywhere but in public schools

Oliver Brown, on behalf of his daughter, Linda, sued a school board, not a public park commission or state-run railroad, though throughout the South these public facilities were no less segregated than schools. Within the private sector as well, discrimination was pervasive.

Yet today we see marked progress toward racial equality in public facilities, industry, and politics—but not in our schools.

In light of the *Brown* opinion, the irony is all the greater. The opinion accompanying the Supreme Court's decision barred only school segregation—on the shaky grounds that such segregation harmed the "hearts and minds" of black children (see the essays in this issue by Warren Simmons and Howard Fuller, starting on page 21).

Brown nonetheless changed the country's most basic political and economic institutions. Segregated political rallies, legislative assemblies, and presidential cabinets all went by the boards. Not right away, but eventually.

The workplace, too, is now more often racially mixed than not. When the private sector was told not to discriminate, it complied. Not right away—and not completely—of course. But as younger generations scorned racism and money was to be made by becoming an equal-opportunity employer, private institutions opened their doors. Today, black and white adults with similar scores on standardized tests earn similar wages.

Meanwhile, *Brown*'s consequences for education remain ambiguous at best. On the plus side, legalized school segregation disappeared and most school districts have become as integrated as their cities' demographics will allow.

But the slow march toward further integration was accompanied by bitter conflicts that introduced new problems—involuntary busing that separated schools from families and communities; large, difficult-to-manage school campuses (built to broaden the social mix of the school); tensions between ethnic groups and within-school discrimination; and lowered expectations for students of all social backgrounds. Whites fled bad schools for racially distinctive suburbs.

Worse, African-American students' learning has continued to trail that of whites. Though the achievement gap narrowed in the 1980s, it opened again in the 1990s, at a time when the principles of *Brown* should have been firmly entrenched.

Conventional liberals blame "politicians" for inadequate funding or "society" for its abiding, if now hidden, racism. But money has seldom bought progress in education, and it is difficult to claim that racism survives in schools when it is on the wane elsewhere.

Conventional conservatives are more apt to blame the family, suggesting that the child-rearing practices within black households are the root of the problem. Yet this overlooks growing evidence that disparities between the achievement of blacks and that of whites are smallest among preschoolers—the age at which family influences are pervasive and school influence nil (see the article by Roland Fryer and Steven Levitt on page 64).

African-American students who attend private schools are much more likely to complete college.

Closer to the truth are those who blame Hollywood, television, and the fashion industry for fostering the drug-infested, anti-learning, "hip-hop" youth culture that burgeoned in the 1990s.

If street culture is the problem, then assigned neighborhood schools are not the solution. Only in rare instances do traditional neighborhood schools acquire the sense of mission that can wall off the seductions of their immediate environment.

Learning is best fostered when schools draw boundaries that separate classroom studies from the opiates of street life. Because good private schools have discovered this secret, African-American students who attend them are much more likely to complete college than are comparable students from public schools. There are signs that charter schools have discovered this secret as well. As schools of choice, not assignment, they have an institutional incentive to do so.

Unfortunately, some still argue for traditional public schools on the grounds that black families are too ill-informed to make wise choices. But over time, knowledge and commitment will come naturally to most parents, if choice is made available. To ignore this is racist in the extreme. School choice is, indeed, the civil-rights issue of today.

– PAUL E. PETERSON

MISSION STATEMENT In the stormy seas of school reform, this journal will steer a steady course, presenting the facts as best they can be determined, giving voice (without fear or favor) to worthy research, sound ideas, and responsible arguments. Bold change is needed in American K–12 education, but *Education Next* partakes of no program, campaign, or ideology. It goes where the evidence points.

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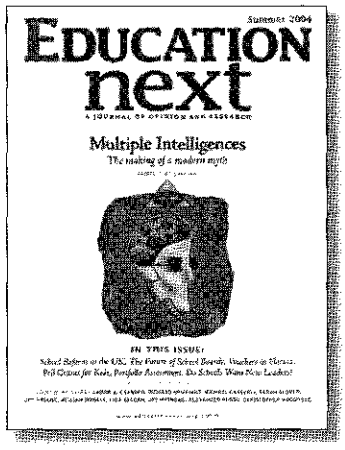
How many intelligences?

Daniel Willingham's critique of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences ("Reframing the Mind," *Check the Facts*, Summer 2004) is yet another attempt by a psychometric supremacist to quash other views of intelligence.

Psychometric diehards assume that the correct model of intelligence can be generated by investigating how people think in highly atypical situations. It is true, as Willingham writes, that data from 130,000 individuals enabled John Carroll to produce a three-tiered model of intellect—with g (general intelligence) atop it all. But it is also true that those 130,000 individuals were largely plopped into isolated rows where they frenetically addressed peculiar puzzles and bubble-in answer sheets.

Rather than investigating bubble-sheet results, Gardner sought to illuminate the mental abilities that underlie actual human accomplishments found across cultures. What makes people capable mathematicians and writers as well as teachers, historians, farmers, artists, and even comedians? Gardner tackled this question by drawing on a wide array of evidence from the sciences and social sciences. Since statistical techniques for analyzing this diversity of evidence do not exist, Gardner could not simply use traditional methods. Therefore, he laid out his evidence, criteria, and reasoning—just as, for instance, Charles Darwin did.

Does this mean that all uses of Gardner's theory are effective? No. Gardner, who had not anticipated the wide use of his theory in schools, initially encouraged broad experimentation with it. Hence there were brilliant and stupid uses. My recently published investigation of 41 schools that use multiple intelligences theory has identified those practices that enable educators to use the theory, not for its own sake, but to enable students to produce high-level work. It remains highly questionable whether psychometric theories, which are neither



the whole story of human intelligence nor terribly useful to teachers, can do anything similar.

MINDY L. KORNHABER
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

The school that I lead, the New City School, has been implementing multiple intelligences theory since 1988. Our experiences with using Gardner's theory have been very positive. Multiple intelligences theory is a tool that can be used to enable more children to learn and to enable children to learn more. By considering all of the intelligences as they plan and teach, teachers become student-centered rather than curriculum-focused. Too often, schooling is designed so that the only students who succeed are those who are strong in the scholastic intelligences (linguistic and logical-mathematical). In a multiple intelligences school, all of the intelligences are used as tools to facilitate and support students as they learn the requisite curriculum and skills. Our program is no less rigorous because of our use of Gardner's theory; instead, our use of multiple intelligences gives our students richer and wider ways to learn.

THOMAS R. HOERR
New City School
St. Louis, Missouri

Many educators object to the unitary view of intelligence because it tends to narrowly circumscribe the measurement of intelligence and to emphasize verbal and mathematical (and related) skills. It is assumed that even if one could measure a broader range of abilities, the results would not alter any particular child's standing on a combined intelligence scale. Verbal and math skills have traditionally been the focus of intelligence tests because these skills were the focus of schools; hence inquiry into understanding children's intelligence was limited to those skills viewed as essential to learning. As Willingham says, "If it was important in school, it was important on the intelligence test."

Educators have good reasons for seeking alternative views. If by reconstructing our views of children's intelligence we can successfully teach a wider range of students, teachers should not be accused of being confused for doing just that.

LAURA ROGERS
Francis W. Parker Charter School
Devens, Massachusetts

Worcester responds

William G. Howell concludes that the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has had "little impact at all" on the Worcester Public Schools ("One Child at a Time," *Feature*, Summer 2004). He bases this conclusion solely on the fact that few parents in Worcester chose to exercise their rights to switch schools or to choose a for-profit vendor for after-school tutoring—options they possess under the federal law's school choice and supplemental services provisions.

But should we be surprised that few parents chose to move their children to other schools? Howell reports that 80 percent of the Worcester parents he surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with their child's school. Satisfied parents do not transfer their children out of a school.

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Howell neglects to mention that among the 14 largest urban districts in Massachusetts, Worcester had the second highest percentage (68 percent) of schools meeting state targets for making "adequate yearly progress" under the law; the statewide average was 48 percent. As a district, we met adequate yearly progress targets in English for all economic and ethnic subgroups of students.

Howell also downplays the fact that the Worcester school district is a state-approved provider of tutoring services to more than 800 students. Competing against for-profit tutoring firms, our highly qualified teachers have offered more services to more children for less money.

The major problem with No Child Left Behind lies with the accountability system and the definition of adequate yearly progress. Adequate yearly progress is an Enron-like mess based on different students in different years and different state cut-offs regarding when students are deemed "proficient." Rather than focus on the real problem, Howell pursues the red herrings of choice and supplemental services.

JAMES CARADONIO
Superintendent
Worcester Public Schools
Worcester, Massachusetts

William Howell responds: In Worcester, one child has taken advantage of the choice provisions of NCLB in order to seek supplemental tutoring services from a private provider, and one other child switched out of a school deemed in need of improvement in order to attend a higher-performing public school. Yet thousands of students qualified for both educational options. The purpose of my essay was to explain how this happened.

I identified numerous factors that contributed to the low take-up rates in Worcester, ranging from the district's practices and students' demographics to parents' interests in alternative schooling options. Nothing in Caradonio's response rebuts any particular observation. Instead, Caradonio highlights those that compliment his district and dismisses the rest. By his account, it is immaterial that few parents even knew about their options; that the district created a cumbersome process for exercising those options; or that private providers had few means by which to communicate directly with eligible students.

Abolish school boards?

The continuing battle for control of the New York City schools shows why school boards are a valuable part of public education (see "The Future of School Boards," *Forum*, Summer 2004). In 2002, the state legislature eliminated the school board and gave total control of the school system to Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Over the past two years, however, many who wanted to see the board abolished have grown unhappy with Bloomberg's handling of the public schools.

Brookings Institution scholar Diane Ravitch and United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten, both of whom supported mayoral control, wrote recently in the *New York Times* that Bloomberg's powers are "unchecked" and the city's education department operates in secrecy, denying "the right of the public to have a say in important decisions." In their words, it is time to allow a "board of respected citizens to set policy for the schools" and to "reestablish the role of the public in public education."

This sounds like Ravitch and Weingarten want a local school board.

In Canada, the government of New Brunswick abolished elected school boards in 1996 in favor of a corporate governance structure that gave absolute power to the Minister of Education. Four years later, the parents, the public, and school administrators were frustrated at being left out of the decision-making process. They vented their anger at the polls and voted out the ruling party. The new government immediately reinstated elected school boards.

That's because school board members are the public's voice in public education. For generations, the public has trusted school boards to balance community goals and values with the needs of children. School board members are accessible to parents, advocates for children, and accountable for student performance. They are an essential component of the future of public education.

ANNE BRYANT
Executive Director
National School Boards Association
Alexandria, Virginia

In arguing for the elimination of the local school board, Chester Finn and Lisa Keegan ("Lost at Sea") state, "[State-level child-centered funding] would create not

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only a more equitable system, but also more effective schools."

I agree that a child-centered funding system would be more equitable. I also agree that our large city school districts are examples of monopolies at their worst. Yet it is not clear that a complete move to a state-funded, child-centered funding system would lead to more effective schools. For one thing, taxpayers might be less likely to support the current high levels of education funding if such funding were completely centralized.

In researching the effects of school-finance centralization in California, Harvard economist Caroline Hoxby found that increased centralization of school financing led to lowered per-pupil spending. This isn't surprising given that many individuals support local school taxes because doing so will increase the resale value of their home. No such incentive exists in a world of centralized funding.

JOSHUA HALL
The Buckeye Institute
Columbus, Ohio

Reform in Britain

No doubt readers of Christopher Woodhead's article ("The British Experience," *Feature*, Summer 2004) will have figured out that this is a polemic rather than a balanced discussion of the pros and cons of recent education reforms in England. For instance, Woodhead's claim that the examination agencies in England lack real independence has never been substantiated by any of the many independent investigations carried out from time to time in response to accusations of the "dumbing down" of exams.

The "exhaustion and anger of teachers" referred to in the article is seldom directed at the "educational establishment" but more often at policymakers—and most frequently at those who offer unbalanced and poorly substantiated criticism of the education system and whose own policy ideas are so obviously ideologically driven.

PETER ROBINSON
Institute for Public Policy Research
London, England

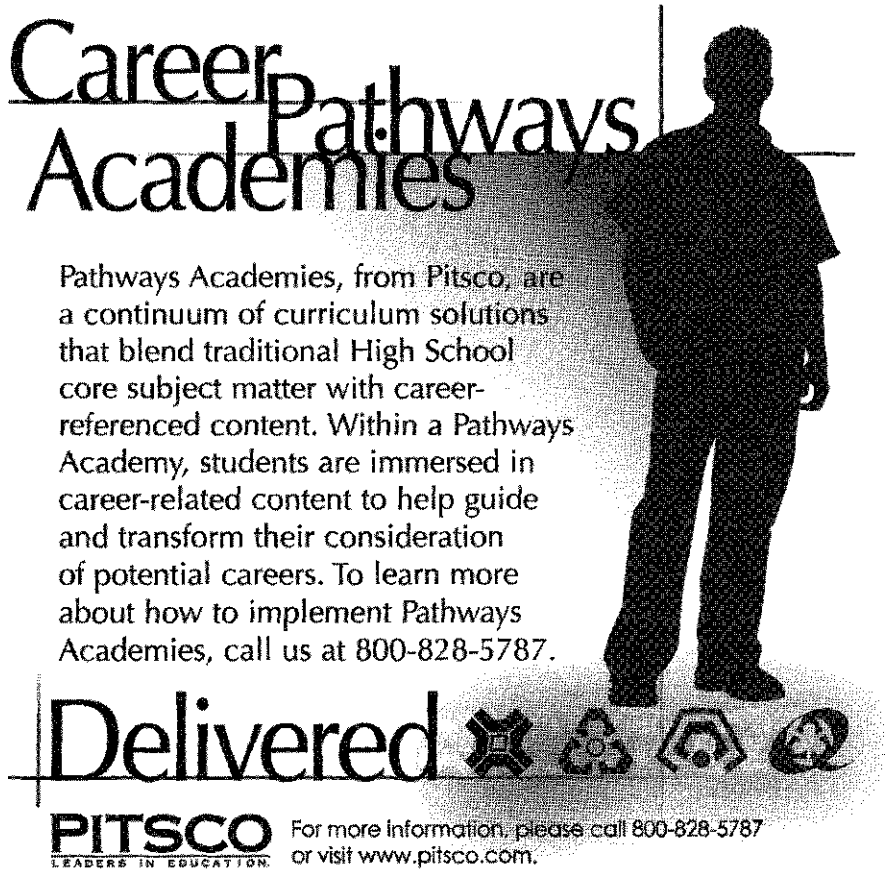
Consequences of *Brown*

Thomas Dee's finding ("The Race Connection," *Research*, Spring 2004) that both white and black students learned more when taught by teachers of the same race has implications that go far beyond his discussion.

One of the unfortunate results of *Brown v. Board of Education* was that many black teachers and principals throughout the nation lost their jobs, as white administrators refused to hire them for the newly integrated schools. As a result, most black and Hispanic students still have white teachers. In 2000, 38 percent of public schools had not a single teacher of color; nationally, only 6 percent of teachers are black. Even in large urban school districts, where the student body is largely minority, only about 18 percent of teachers are black and 9 percent Hispanic.

To some extent, then, the racial disparity in the teaching force that has been an unfortunate consequence of *Brown* has probably contributed to the survival of the achievement gap that integration was meant to solve.

LEONIE HAIMSON
Class Size Matters
New York, New York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Technology in Education

Will the reality ever match the lofty promises of reformers?

Over the past decade, school districts across the country have invested billions in creating wired classrooms and schools, with significant financial and moral support from government at all levels. At the same time, the rush to infuse schools with the latest technology has provoked critiques from a number of observers, with titles such as *The Flickering Mind* and *Oversold and Underused.* These typically paint a portrait of computers gathering dust in the back of classrooms or used primarily as extraordinarily expensive typewriters.

The question is whether, if put to more productive use, educational technology will live up to the transformational dreams of its loudest promoters. In the following essays, Lowell Monke and Frederick M. Hess, both former teachers, explore the distance between today's pedagogies and the classroom of tomorrow—and ask how to bridge the gap.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE NOBLE

Lowell Monke wonders if machines are robbing students of their humanities

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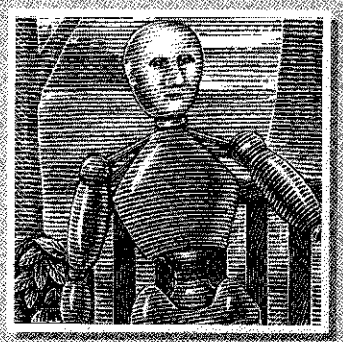

Frederick M. Hess has a technological vision of his own

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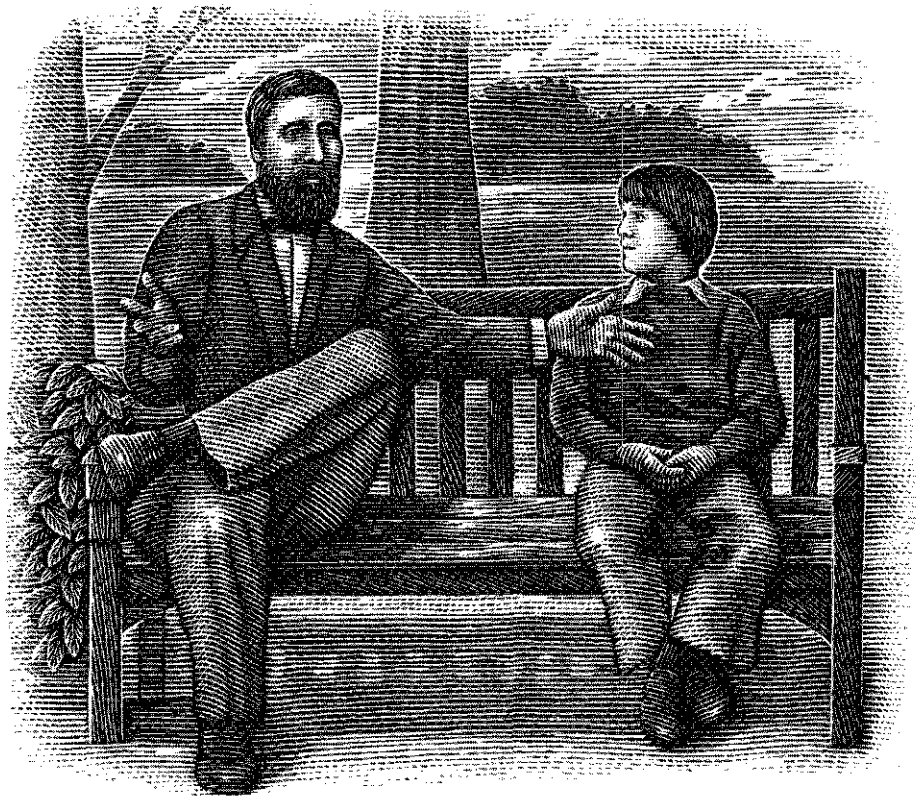
In the rush to place a computer on every desk, schools are neglecting intellectual creativity and personal growth



The Human Touch

In 1922 Thomas Edison proclaimed, "I believe the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks." Thus began a long string of spectacularly wrong predictions regarding the capacity of various technologies to revolutionize education.

What betrayed Edison and his successors was an uncritical faith in technology itself. This faith has become a sort of ideology increasingly dominating K–12 education. In the past two decades, school systems, with generous financial and moral support from foundations and all levels of government, have made massive investments in computer technology and in creating "wired" schools. The goal is twofold: to provide children with the computer skills necessary to flourish in a high-tech world and to give them access to tools and information that will enhance their learning in subjects like mathematics and history.

However, in recent years a number of scholars have questioned the vast sums being devoted to educational technology. They rarely quibble with the need for children to learn how to use computers, but find little evidence that making technology more available leads

BY LOWELL MONKE

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to higher student achievement in core subjects. As Stanford University professor Larry Cuban writes in *Oversold and Underused*, "There have been no advances (measured by higher academic achievement of urban, suburban, or rural students) over the past decade that can be confidently attributed to broader access to computers.... The link between test-score improvements and computer availability and use is even more contested."

While it is important to examine the relationship between technology and learning, that debate often devolves into a tit-for-tat of dueling studies and anecdotes. The problem with framing the issue merely as a question of whether technology boosts test scores is that it fails to address the interaction between technology and the values learned in school. In short, we need to ask what kind of learning tends to take place with the computer and what kind gets left out.

The Need for Firsthand Experience

A computer can inundate a child with mountains of information. However, all of this learning takes place the same way: through abstract symbols, decontextualized and cast on a two-dimensional screen. Contrast that with the way children come to know a tree—by peeling its bark, climbing its branches, sitting under its shade, jumping into its piled-up leaves. Just as important, these firsthand experiences are enveloped by feelings and associations—muscles being used, sun warming the skin, blossoms scenting the air. The computer cannot even approximate any of this.

There is a huge qualitative difference between learning about something, which requires only information, and learning from something, which requires that the learner enter into a rich and complex relationship with the subject at hand. For smaller children especially, that relationship is as physical as it is mental. Rousseau pointed out long ago that the child's first and most important teacher is his hands. Every time I walk through a store with my sons and grow tired of saying, "Don't touch that!" I am reminded of Rousseau's wisdom.

What "Information Age" values tempt us to forget is that all of the information gushing through our electronic networks is abstract; that is, it is all representations, one or more symbolic steps removed from any concrete object or personal experience. Abstract information must somehow connect to a child's concrete experiences if it is to be meaningful. If there is little personal, concrete experience with which to connect, those abstractions become inert bits of data, unlikely to mobilize genuine interest or to generate comprehension of the objects and ideas they represent. Furthermore, making meaning of new experiences—and the ideas that grow out of them—requires quiet contemplation. By pumping information at children at phenomenal speed, the computer short-circuits that process. As social critic Theodore Roszak states in *The Cult of Information*, "An excess of information may actually crowd out ideas, leaving the mind (young minds especially) distracted by sterile, disconnected facts, lost among the shapeless heaps of data."

This deluge of shapeless heaps of data caused the late social critic Marshall McLuhan to conclude that schools would have to become "recognized as civil defense against media fallout." McLuhan understood that the consumption and manipulation of symbolic, abstract information is not an adequate substitute for concrete, firsthand involvement with objects, people, nature, and community, for it ignores the child's primary educational need—to make meaning out of experience.

Simulation's Limits

Of course, computers can simulate experience. However, one of the byproducts of these simulations is the replacement of values inherent in real experience with a different set of abstract values that are compatible with the technological ideology. For example, "Oregon Trail," a computer game that helps children simulate the exploration of the American frontier, teaches students that the pioneers' success in crossing the Great Plains depended most decisively on managing their resources. This is the message implicit in the game's structure, which asks students, in order to survive, to make a series of rational, calculated decisions based on precise measurements of their resources. In other words, good pioneers were good accountants.

But this completely misses the deeper significance of this great American migration, which lies not in the computational capabilities of the pioneers but in their determination, courage, ingenuity, and faith as they overcame extreme conditions and their almost constant miscalculations. Because the computer cannot traffic in these deeply human qualities, the resilient souls of the pioneers are absent from the simulation.

Here we encounter the ambiguity of technology: its propensity to promote certain qualities while sidelining others. McLuhan called this process amplification and amputation. He used the microphone as an example. The microphone can literally amplify one's voice, but in doing so it reduces the speaker's need to exercise his own lung power. Thus one's inner capacities may atrophy.

This phenomenon is of particular concern with children,

The general computer skills a youth needs to enter the workplace or college can easily be learned in one year of instruction during high school.

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Clinging to the belief that computers have no effect on us allows us to turn a blind eye to the sacrifices that schools have made to accommodate them.

who are in the process of developing all kinds of inner capacities. Examples abound of technology's circumventing the developmental process: the student who uses a spell checker instead of learning to spell, the student who uses a calculator instead of learning to add—young people sacrificing internal growth for external power.

Often, however, this process is not so easily identified. An example is the widespread use of computers in preschools and elementary schools to improve sagging literacy skills. What could be wrong with that? Quite a bit, if we consider the prerequisites to reading and writing. We know that face-to-face conversation is a crucial element in the development of both oral and written communication skills. On the one hand, conversation forces children to generate their own images, which provide connections to the language they hear and eventually will read. This is one reason why reading to children and telling them stories is so important. Television and computers, on the other hand, generally require nothing more than the passive acceptance of prefabricated images.

Now consider that a study reported in *U.S. News & World Report* estimated that the current generation of children, with its legions of struggling readers, would experience one-third fewer face-to-face conversations during their school years than the generation of 30 years ago. It may well be that educators are trying to solve the problem of illiteracy by turning to the very technology that has diminished the experiences children need to become literate.

Obsolete Lessons

But students need to start using computers early in order to prepare for the high-tech future, don't they? Consider that the vast majority of students graduating from college this past spring started kindergarten in 1986, two years after the Macintosh was invented. If they used computers at all in elementary school, they were probably command-line machines with no mouse, no hard drive, and only rudimentary graphics. By the time these students graduated from college, whatever computer skills they picked up in primary school had long been rendered obsolete by the frenetic pace of technological innovation.

The general computer skills a youth needs to enter the workplace or college can easily be learned in one year of instruction during high school. During the nine years that I taught Advanced Computer Technology for the Des Moines public schools, I discovered that the level of computer skills students brought to the class had little bearing on their success. Teaching them the computer skills was the easy part. What I was not able to provide were the rich and varied firsthand experiences students needed in order to connect the abstract symbols they had to manipulate on the screen to the world around them. Students with scant computer experience but rich ideas and life experiences were, by the end of the year, generating sophisticated relational databases, designing marketable websites, and creating music videos. Ironically, it was the students who had curtailed their time climbing the trees, rolling the dough, and conversing with friends and adults in order to become computer "wizards" who typically had the most trouble finding creative things to do with the computer.

Certainly, many of these highly skilled young people (almost exclusively young men) find opportunities to work on computer and software design at prestigious universities and corporations. But such jobs represent a minuscule percentage of the occupations in this nation. And in any case, the task of early education is not merely to prepare students for making a living; it is to help them learn how to make a life. For that purpose, the computer wizards in my class seemed particularly ill prepared.

So why is it that schools persist in believing they must expose children to computers early? I think it is for the same reason that we take our children to church, to Fourth of July parades, and indeed to rituals of all types: to initiate them into a culture—in this case, the culture of high technology. The purpose is to infuse them with a set of values that supports the high-tech culture that has spread so rapidly across our society. And this, as we shall see, is perhaps the most disturbing trend of all.

The Ecological Impact of Technology

As the promise of a computer revolution in education fades, I often hear promoters fall back on what I'll term the neutrality argument: "Computers are just tools; it's what you do with them that matters." In some sense this is no more than a tautology: Of course it matters *how* we use computers in schools. What matters more, however, is that we use them *at all*. Every tool demands that we somehow change our environment or values in order to accommodate its use. For instance, the building of highways to accommodate the automobile hastened the flight to the suburbs and the decline of inner cities. And over the past 50 years we have radically altered our social landscape to accommodate the television set. In his seminal book *Autonomous Technology*, Langdon Winner dubbed this characteristic "reverse adaptation."

Consider the school personnel who already understand, intuitively, how this principle works: the music teacher whose program has been cut in order to fund computer labs; the principal who has had to beef up security in order to protect

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high-priced technology; the superintendent who has had to craft an "acceptable use" agreement that governs children's use of the Internet (and for the first time in our history renounces the school's responsibility for the material children are exposed to while in school). What the computers-are-just-tools argument ignores is the ecological nature of powerful technologies—that is, their introduction into an environment reconstitutes all of the relationships in that environment, some for better and some for worse. Clinging to the belief that computers have no effect on us allows us to turn a blind eye to the sacrifices that schools have made to accommodate them.

Not only do computers send structural ripples throughout a school system, but they also subtly alter the way we think about education. The old saw, "To a man with a hammer everything looks like a nail," has many corollaries (the walls of my home once testified to one of my favorites: to a four-year-old with a crayon, everything looks like drawing paper). One that fits here is, "To an educator with a computer, everything looks like information." And the more prominent we make computers in schools (and in our own lives), the more we see the rapid accumulation, manipulation, and sharing of information as central to the learning process—edging out the contemplation and expression of ideas and the gradual development of meaningful connections to the world.

In reconstituting learning as the acquisition of information, the computer also shifts our values. The computer embodies a particular value system, a technological thought world first articulated by Francis Bacon and René Descartes four hundred years ago, that turns our attention outward toward asserting control over our environment (that is essentially what technologies do—extend our power to control from a distance). As it has gradually come to dominate Western thinking, this ideology has entered our educational institutions. Its growing dominance is witnessed in the language that abounds in education: talk of empowerment, student control of learning, standards, assessment tools, and productivity. Almost gone from the conversation are those inner concerns—wisdom, truth, character, imagination, creativity, and meaning—that once formed the core values of education. Outcomes have replaced insights as the yardstick of learning, while standardized tests are replacing human judgment as the means of assessment. No tool supports this technological shift more than computers.

In the Wrong Hands

There are some grave consequences in pushing technological values too far and too soon. Soon after my high-school computer lab was hooked up to the Internet, I realized that my students suddenly had more power to do more damage to more people than any teenagers in history. Had they been carefully prepared to assume responsibility for that power through the arduous process of developing self-discipline, ethical and moral strength, compassion, and connection with the community around them? Hardly. They and their teachers had been too busy putting that power to use.

We must help our young people develop the considerable moral and ethical strength needed to resist abusing the enormous power these machines give them. Those qualities take a great deal of time and effort to develop in a child, but they ought to be as much a prerequisite to using powerful computer tools as is learning how to type. Trying to teach a student to use the power of computer technology appropriately without those moral and ethical traits is like trying to grow a tree without roots.

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Rather than nurture those roots, we hand our smallest children machines and then gush about the power and control they display over that rarefied environment. From the earliest years we teach our children that if they have a problem, we have an external tool that will fix it (computers are not the only tools; Ritalin, for example, is a powerful technology that has been scandalously overprescribed to "fix" behavior problems). After years of this training, when our teenagers find themselves confused, angry, depressed, or overwhelmed, we wonder why so many of them don't reach out to the community for help or dig deep within themselves to find the internal strength to persevere, but rather reach for the most powerful (and often deadly) tool they can find to "fix" their problems. Our attempts to use powerful machines to accelerate or remediate learning are part of a pattern that sacrifices the growth of our children's inner resources and deep connectedness to community for the ability to extend their power outward into the world. The world pays a high price for the trade-off.

The response that I often hear to this criticism—that we just need to balance computer use in school with more "hands-on" activities (and maybe a little character education)—sounds reasonable. Certainly schools should help young people develop balanced lives. But the call for balance within schools ignores the massive commitment of resources required to make computers work at all and the resultant need to keep them constantly in use to justify that expense. Furthermore, that view of balance completely discounts the enormous imbalance of children's lives outside of school. Children typically spend nearly half their waking life outside of school sitting in front of screens. Their world is saturated with the artificial, the abstract, the mechanical. Whereas the intellectual focus of schools in the rural society of the 19th century compensated for a childhood steeped in nature and concrete activity, balance today requires a reversal of roles, with schools compensating for the overly abstract, symbolic, and artificial environment that children experience outside of school.

Technology with a Human Purpose

None of this is to say that we should banish computers from all levels of K–12 education. As young people move into subject areas like advanced mathematics and chemistry that rely on highly abstract concepts, computers have much to offer. Young people will also need computer skills when they graduate. But computer-based learning needs to grow out of years of concrete experience and a fundamental appreciation for the world apart from the machine, a world in which nature and human beings are able to speak for and through themselves to the child. Experiences with the computer need to grow out of early reliance on simple tools that depend on and develop the skills of the child rather than complex tools, which have so many skills already built in. By concentrating high technology in the upper grades, we honor the natural developmental stages of childhood. And there is a bonus: the release of massive amounts of resources currently tied up in expensive machinery that can be redirected toward helping young children develop the inner resources needed to put that machinery to good use when they become adults.

There remains a problem, however. When Bacon began pushing the technological ideology, Western civilization was full of meaning and wretchedly short on the material means of survival. Today we face the reverse situation: a society saturated in material comforts but almost devoid of meaning. Schools that see their job as preparing young people to meet the demands of a technology-driven world merely embrace and advance the idea that human needs are no longer our highest priority, that we must adapt to meet the demands of our machines. We may deliver our children into the world with tremendous technical power, but it is rarely with a well-developed sense of human purpose to guide its use.

If we are to alter that relationship, we will have to think of technological literacy in a new way. Perhaps we could call it technology awareness. Whatever its name, that kind of study, rather than technology training, is what needs to be integrated into the school curriculum. I am currently working with the Alliance for Childhood on a set of developmental guidelines to help educators create technology-awareness programs that help young people think about, not just with, technology. This is not the place to go into the details of those guidelines. What I want to emphasize here is that they share one fundamental feature: They situate technology within a set of human values rather than out in front of those values. They do not start by asking what children need to do to adapt to a machine world, but rather, which technologies can best serve human purposes at every educational level and how we can prepare children to make wise decisions about their use in the future.

The most daunting problems facing our society—drugs, violence, racism, poverty, the dissolution of family and community, and certainly war—are all matters of human purpose and meaning. Filling schools with computers will not help find the answers to why the freest nation in the world has the highest percentage of citizens behind bars or why the wealthiest nation in history condemns a sixth of its children to poverty.

So it seems that we are faced with a remarkable irony: that in an age of increasing artificiality, children first need to sink their hands deeply into what is real; that in an age of light-speed communication, it is crucial that children take the time to develop their own inner voice; that in an age of incredibly powerful machines we must first teach our children how to use the incredible powers that lie deep within themselves.

Lowell Monke is an assistant professor of education at Wittenberg University.

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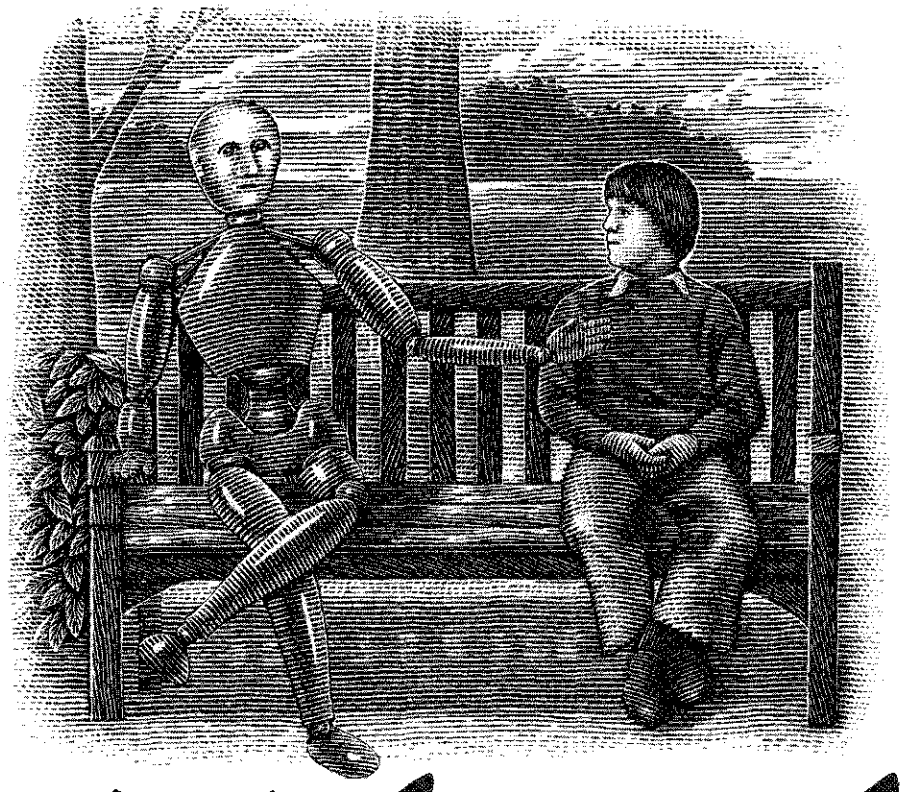

Technical Difficulties

Information technology could help schools do more with less. If only educators knew how to use it

In 2000, at the height of the technology boom, Maine governor Angus King made a splash by proposing to give laptops to all of the state's 7th graders. His stated purpose was to "do something different from what everybody else is doing." Missing from the $50 million proposal, however, was any rationale related to school performance. No evident thought had been put into how this major investment in new technology would make schools more efficient, produce future savings, or enhance the learning process.

King's proposal was typical of the way in which technologies like the personal computer and the Internet have been used in public education. The tendency has been to sprinkle computers and Internet connections across classrooms in the pleasant hope that teachers will integrate them into their lessons. The purpose is seldom to make teachers more productive or to rethink the way in which lessons are delivered. Indeed, PCs often serve as little more than high-priced typewriters, sitting in the back of classrooms unused for most of the school day.

This state of affairs stands in sharp contrast to how technology is used by business and government enterprises that engage in competition with other manufacturers and service providers. To them, technology is not an end in itself, something to be adopted merely because it exists, but a tool for self-improvement. A competitive enterprise adopts new technologies when these enable workers to tackle new problems or to do the *same thing* as before, but in a *cheaper and more efficient* fashion. For example, technology investments enabled the U.S. Postal Service, under heavy competitive pressure from United Parcel Service and Federal Express, to trim its workforce by 16,000 in 2003. These cuts followed layoffs of 23,000 employees over the preceding two years. The cuts were made possible not by reducing service, but by substituting technology in areas where people were performing either routine tasks or roles that automated machines could handle more efficiently.

BY FREDERICK M. HESS

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Public schools have no reason to regard technology as a tool to trim their workforce or to rethink the ways in which they deliver education – for they face no pressure to do so.

At a broader level, in recent years the nation's 100 largest companies improved productivity so rapidly that in 2003 it took only nine workers to do what ten workers had done in 2001. Economists have long recognized that the potential for growth in productivity is more limited in service sectors like education than in manufacturing or retail. Nonetheless, even the service sector has witnessed productivity gains of about 1 percent a year during the past three decades.

Public schools, by contrast, have steadily *added* to the ranks of teachers and reduced class sizes even as they make ever-larger investments in new technologies. Spending on technology in public schools increased from essentially zero in 1970 to $118 per student in 2002 and $89 per student in 2003, according to *Education Week*. In 1998 there were 12.1 students for every computer connected to the Internet; by 2002, the ratio had dropped to 4.8 students per computer, according to the Department of Education. In the past five years alone, the nation has spent more than $20 billion linking schools and classrooms to the Internet through the federal E-rate program with little to show for it in the way of instructional changes or improved outcomes. Meanwhile, despite these huge new investments in technology (see Figure 1), massive increases in the workforce of teachers drove the student-teacher ratio from 22 students per teacher to 16 students per teacher between 1970 and 2001.

Cultural Bias

Why have public schools failed so far to put all this fancy new technology to good use? One clear reason is that they face no pressure to do so. Organizations like the Postal Service make effective use of technology because they must keep up with FedEx, UPS, and other delivery services. Competitive enterprises are on a constant search for ways of boosting their productivity, holding down their costs, and developing innovative products—because they know that their competitors are always on the lookout for similar advantages. No executive wants to adopt a painful course like downsizing the workforce or imposing wrenching change. They take these steps only when compelled.

Public schools, however, are insulated from the pressures of competition. They thus have no reason to regard technology as a tool to trim their workforce or to rethink the ways in which they deliver education. This problem is compounded by the fact that collective-bargaining agreements between school districts and employee unions have made using technology to displace workers or reinvent processes extraordinarily difficult.

There is also a bias within the culture of education against ideas that seem too "businesslike." Indeed, the very words "efficiency" and "cost-effectiveness" can set the teeth of parents and educators on edge. Proposals to use technology to downsize the workforce, alter instructional delivery, or improve managerial efficiency are inevitably attacked by education authorities as part of an effort to, in the words of Henry Giroux, "Transform public education ... [in order] to expand the profits of investors, educate students as consumers, and train young people for the low-paying jobs of the new global marketplace." The notion that the responsible use of public money is the work of some shadowy global conspiracy evinces a fundamental lack of seriousness about educating children.

Traditionalists insist that it is impossible to educate children more efficiently, that there is no way technology can be substituted for anything that educators do. They frequently compare the act of teaching to the arts: where the act of creation itself is the end product, it can be difficult or impossible to use technology to improve performance. As the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the legendary U.S. senator, was fond of saying, producing a Mozart quartet two centuries ago required four musicians, four stringed instruments, and, say, 35 minutes. Producing the same Mozart quartet today requires the same resources. Despite breathtaking technological advances, productivity has not changed.

In the case of schooling, however, this analogy is incomplete and ultimately misleading. In the arts, what has changed over two centuries is that, through radio, CDs, television, and digital media, the number of people able to *hear and appreciate* a given performance has increased dramatically, at an ever-decreasing cost. Improved technology has now made available to the general public what was once the preserve of the elite.

The spread of the Internet and other technological advances has created similar opportunities in education. For instance, during the 2002–03 school year, the Florida Virtual School enrolled more than 6,800 students in its 75 course offerings. Florida Virtual is a public entity that provides instruction to students in schools and districts throughout the state. The school provides web-based classes, instruction, and assessments to students in a variety of academic subjects and electives. Like virtual schools operating in 15 other states, Florida Virtual allows faculty to provide courses to a scattered student population. Programs like

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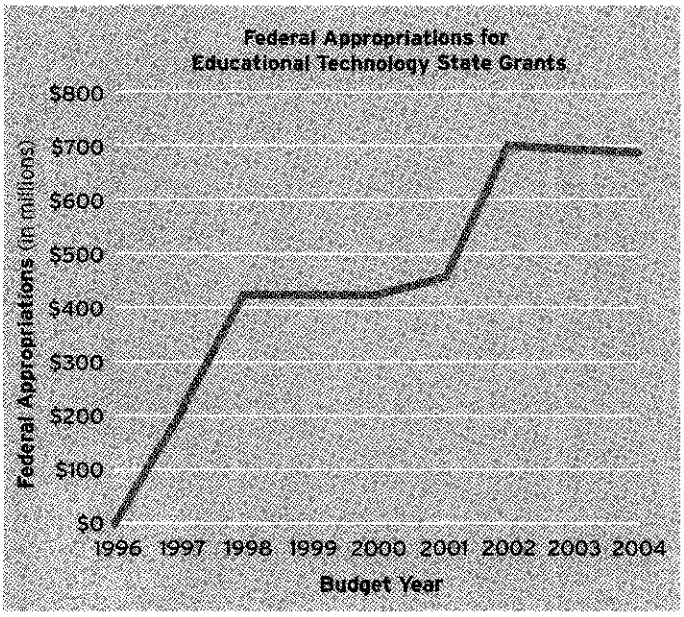
Investing Without a Return (Figure 1)

Since 1997, the federal government has appropriated more than a total of $4 billion to make grants to the states for the purchase of educational technology.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

Florida Virtual may make it possible to provide some academic instruction more cheaply and more effectively, freeing up resources for other needs.

At the university level, nearly 2 million students took at least one course online in the fall of 2003. In a national survey of nearly 1,000 college administrators conducted by the Sloan Consortium, 57 percent of the administrators reported that Internet-based courses were already at least equivalent to traditional courses in quality. And a third of the administrators thought that the web-based courses would be superior to in-class instruction within three years. Such improvements are to be expected among the many colleges and universities now competing for students' distance-learning dollars. However, efforts to use the Internet in an effective manner are few and far between among K–12 public schools.

Technology and Data Management

Used wisely, information technology does have the capacity to help schools become dramatically more effective. Data systems that track information on individual students permit teachers to quickly check the performance of individual students on specific tasks. Information technology can also give school-site personnel unprecedented control over budgets and hiring and can increase their flexibility regarding resource allocation. The Learning First Alliance, a consortium that includes the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, has highlighted how this has worked in districts like Long Beach and Chula Vista, California, and Aldine, Texas.

Outside of schooling, a compelling illustration of how accountability and technology can together improve public services comes from the remarkable success that New York City and other cities enjoyed using new tools to combat crime in the 1990s. The New York City Police Department introduced a system called CompStat, short for "comparative statistics." CompStat compiled data from police reports, crime complaints, arrests, and crime patterns. Over time, the system was broadened to include 734 categories of concern, measuring even the incidence of loud parties and of police overtime.

In the first five years after the 1993 introduction of CompStat, the number of homicides in New York City fell from 1,946 to 629—a rate of decrease three times that of the nation as a whole. Similar results were experienced in other cities that implemented the system, from Philadelphia to Los Angeles. Why did the system work? It helped to hold officers accountable, to pinpoint areas of concern, and to provide the information that can help all police focus on using their skills. In New York City, precincts were required to update their crime statistics on a weekly or daily basis, rather than on the monthly or quarterly basis that had traditionally been the norm. New software allowed department officials to precisely map clusters of crimes, correlating them with drug sale sites, areas of gang activity, schools, public housing, and other relevant locations, and to share the information department-wide within seconds.

In K–12 education, by contrast, we generally manage most information the same way stores managed inventory in the 1960s. Almost unbelievably in this day and age, the typical district spends 40 or more minutes a year per student collecting, processing, and reporting the data required by the U.S. Department of Education under the No Child Left Behind Act. That equates to more than 6,000 hours of employee time in a district with 10,000 students. The tremendous delays in processing data and the staff time consumed are the consequence of districts' having personnel fill out written forms and retyping data from one software package to another. Simply equipping districts to report data electronically and acquire data from existing databases is a daunting challenge.

In K-12 education, we generally manage most information the same way stores managed inventory in the 1960s.

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If we were to retool the teacher's role in a way that used their expertise more carefully, teachers could spend more time on the areas where they add value.

When principals or teachers are asked for this information, those that have it available almost inevitably turn to large binders rather than more nimble electronic interfaces. When asked if he could pull some data on teacher absenteeism or staff training costs, one veteran principal in a well-regarded district sputtered, "Do you know what I do if I want substitute teacher data? I have [my secretary] go through the files and tally it up. She keeps a running total on a piece of graph paper for me. . . . If I want to check on a supply order, I call the deputy [superintendent] for services because we're old friends, and I know he'll actually have someone pull it for me."

Modern information technology offers a wealth of straightforward, time-tested ways to make the necessary data widely and instantly available. There is an array of systems, produced by firms like Scantron and IntelliTools, that allow teachers to call up simple graphs detailing the performance of individual students at the push of a button. However, using these systems requires the consistent collection of information on student learning. Assigning paper-based quizzes ensures that almost all of the information on student mastery will be lost, while the software produced by a dozen or more firms is able to quickly read the results from electronically administered tests into an evolving portfolio of data that tracks student learning.

Ultimately, to be useful, this information has to be at people's fingertips. This is an eminently solvable technical challenge. Huge, complicated organizations, from Wal-Mart to the Internal Revenue Service, routinely track productivity figures, costs, and evaluative measures.

A New Role for Teachers

How else can technology support innovation and reinvention in education? Consider that, historically, teachers have been expected to perform a wide range of responsibilities. Each teacher is expected to design lesson plans, lecture, run class discussions, grade essays and exams, mentor colleagues, supervise homeroom, and patrol the cafeteria. Every year our high schools have tens of thousands of teachers giving variations of the same lectures on the Civil War, the digestive system, and the properties of quadratic equations. In fact, the job description of a teacher today is pretty similar to that of a teacher in 1950.

In medicine, by contrast, progress has been marked by specialization. Doctors with different types of training have taken on more precisely defined roles while less expensive professionals like registered nurses and physical therapists are now performing tasks that don't require a doctor's training. Similarly, 16-year-old volunteers using handheld scanners are able to track medical supplies and hospital inventory with a precision that would have been unimaginable even in the best-managed enterprise just two decades ago.

Imagine a hospital with no nurses or physicians' assistants or physical therapists, where doctors performed every task. We would need a slew of additional doctors, each would have less time to devote to any particular specialty, and costs would skyrocket.

How can technology enable teachers to specialize in the same manner as, say, doctors? Let's consider one classroom example in order to understand how technology can help teachers use their time more productively. Teachers know it is useful to have students write on a regular basis. When I taught high-school social studies, like so many of my colleagues, I required students to write at least three pages a week commenting on what we had read and discussed in class.

The problem is that, at a minimum, this meant my 150 students would turn in 450 pages a week of writing. A teacher who reads, marks, and comments on each student's weekly work in just five minutes will spend more than 12 hours a week simply providing feedback on such writing assignments. Most of this time isn't spent providing particularly cerebral feedback, but instead flagging obvious grammatical and structural problems and reminding students to write in complete sentences. Meanwhile, teachers also need to prepare for teaching, assess other assignments, assist and advise students, and lead a personal life. The result is often that teachers provide limited feedback, read student work sporadically, or (most commonly) assign less writing than might be ideal.

Once, such compromises were unavoidable. That is no longer the case. Today, for instance, there is essay-grading software, commercially available from companies like Vantage Learning or the Educational Testing Service, that can quickly and efficiently analyze pieces of writing on dimensions such as sentence construction, language, and mechanics. Several of these programs match the scores given by expert human raters more than 90 percent of the time, which is actually *higher* in some cases than the rate of agreement among multiple human readers. How can this be? In most cases, we're not talking about evaluating Proustian prose; we're talking about helping the typical 4th grader learn to write clearly and effectively. Most of the mistakes that students make and most of the feedback they need

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are pretty predictable.

Clearly technological tools cannot imitate the full range of skills that a teacher brings when reading a student's essay. Technology cannot gauge a student's growth, analytic prowess, possible interests, or unexpected developments. However, assessment software can replicate the routine elements of evaluation, providing more complete feedback on the essentials while freeing up teachers to make fuller use of their expertise. The result is that teachers spend less time on trivia while adding more value. Rather than requiring hundreds of thousands of teachers to spend hundreds of hours a year circling dangling participles or errant commas, the sensible substitution of technology can help ensure quality feedback while allowing teachers more time for preparation, instruction, and tutoring.

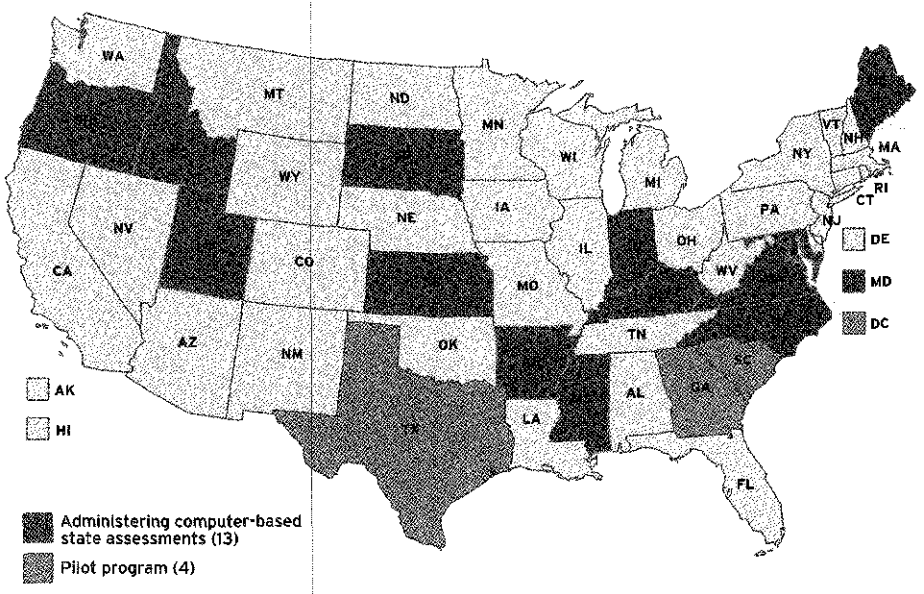
Human ingenuity is the most expensive commodity in the developed world. People are costly to employ; no well-run organization hires reams of bodies when it is possible to hire more selectively and use employees more thoughtfully. This is why efforts to reduce class size are a static, unimaginative, and inefficient way to improve schooling. These efforts presume that teachers need to perform all the duties and tasks now in place; helping them accomplish these tasks more effectively thus requires shrinking the number of students they must teach. However, if we were to retool the teacher's role in a way that used scarce resources like teachers' time and expertise more carefully, teachers could spend more time on the areas where they add value even while working with larger classes of students. If grading essays or examining student performance on weekly quizzes took only half as much time as it currently does, a teacher could work with more students and still have *more* instructional time for each student in that class.

A Tool, Not a Miracle Cure

The nation continues to blithely operate schools in a fashion that was dated in the 1970s and that today would be deemed irresponsible in a toothpaste factory. Rather than demand that education dollars be invested with particular care, we pour money into technology with little thought to how these tools might be used most sensibly.

The Slow March of Innovation (Figure 2)

During the 2003–04 school year, 16 states and the District of Columbia were administering or piloting computer-based state assessments.



SOURCE: *Education Week Technology Counts 2004*

The ability to instantly share full information on student performance, school performance, and costs across vast distances permits a focus on results that was simply not feasible until the most recent decade. The information technology that makes the easy sharing of information possible is the engine that makes tough-minded accountability, school choice, and visionary leadership a possibility.

Using new technological tools to relieve educators of routine functions will help them focus on those roles that add substantial value—enhancing their contribution, making the organization more productive, and thereby increasing both the benefit to the customer and the resources available to reward employees. Reducing rote demands allows people to focus on what they do best and reduces the number of talented workers who need to be hired—which, in turn, allows us to pay employees more.

Ultimately, if leaders lack the tools to increase efficiency, streamline their workforce, or sensibly reallocate resources, they won't. Technology is not a miracle cure. It is a tool. Used wisely, it can help professionals to take full advantage of their skills, slash the time spent on rote tasks, and concentrate resources and effort where they are needed most.

Frederick M. Hess is the director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute and author, most recently, of Common Sense School Reform.

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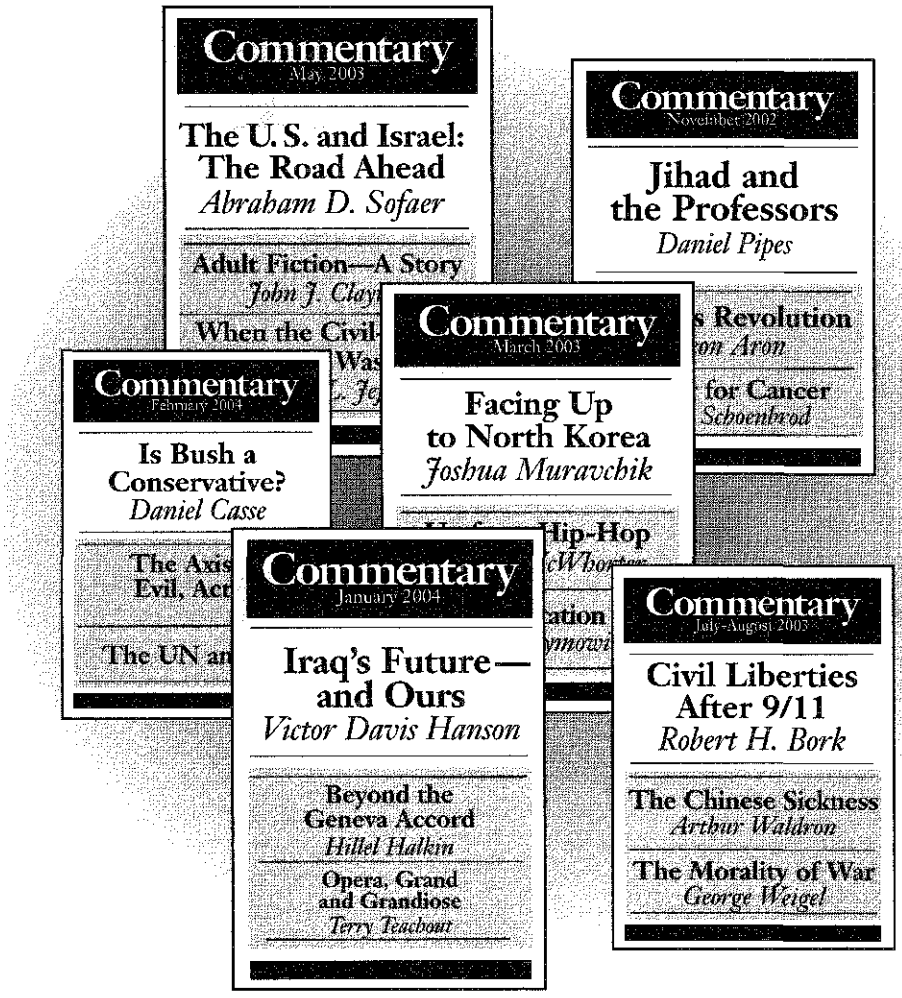
"Very, very important to the life of the United States, to the West, and, I am convinced, to freedom."

—Jeane J. Kirkpatrick



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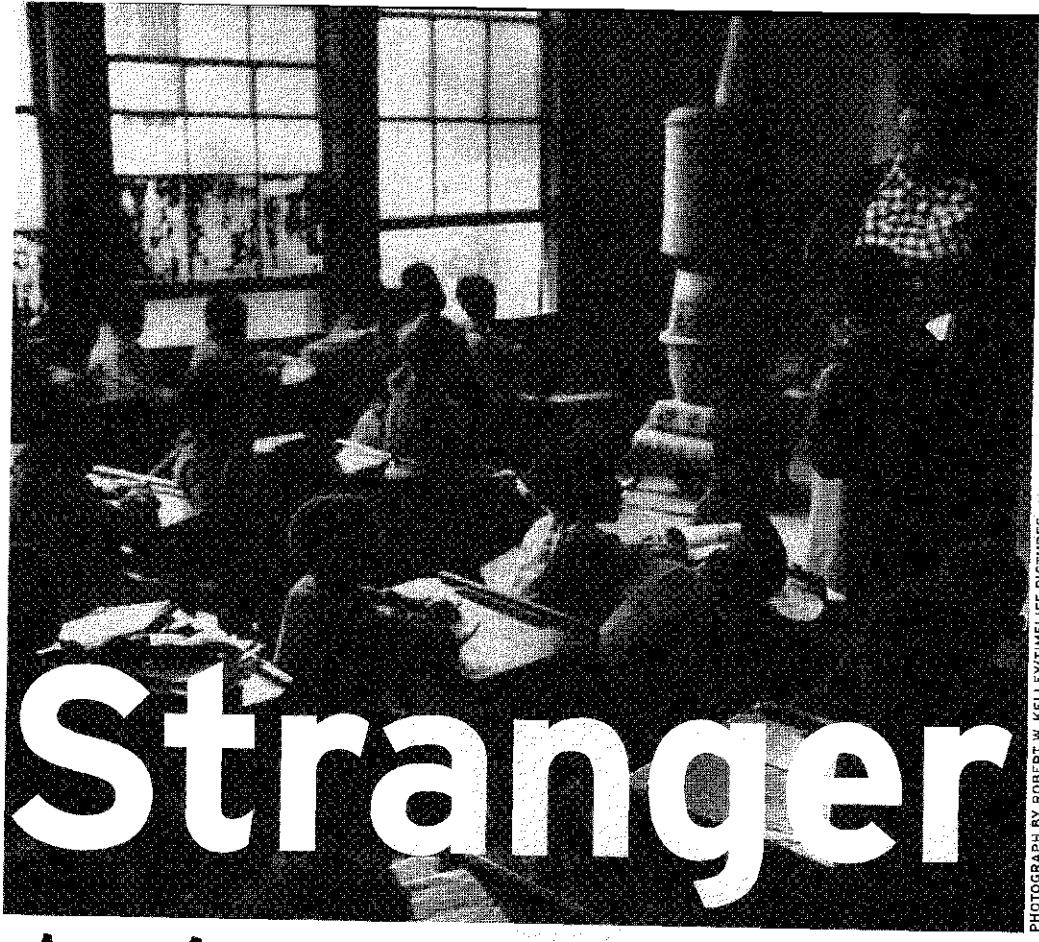

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT W. KELLEY/TIMELIFE PICTURES

A Stranger in Two Worlds

BY WARREN SIMMONS

Moving from segregated to integrated schools proved to be a mixed blessing

In 1960 my world changed radically when, as a 2nd grader at P.S. 121 in East Harlem, I learned that I was among a group of students who would help fulfill the integration mandate of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. My principal and teacher announced that from then on my largely African-American and Latino classmates and I would be riding the bus to P.S. 183 in Yorkville, a predominantly white community on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

My inaugural day at P.S. 183 included indignities like having my hair rubbed by one of my new classmates, a white girl who asked how I managed to comb it. I was also informed that while my academic performance had placed me in the highest track at my East Harlem school, I would be educated with the "average" kids at P.S. 183. My new teachers believed that it would be harder for me to keep up with the privileged students at my new school.

One-Way Integration

Though the goal of the busing program was to integrate P.S. 183, the students there remained predominantly white and from high-income families. Thus I had to adjust to a whole new set

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of realities. On a regular basis I was forced to battle my white teachers' and classmates' low expectations and negative perceptions about blacks and Latinos. Meanwhile, as one of the relatively few minority faces in the classroom, I was routinely called on to serve as the white person's lens on the Negro experience.

Likewise, attending school in a well-to-do community aggravated my sense of my own poverty and forced me to engage in multiple, mostly futile attempts to mask it. Each September I dreaded writing about my summer "vacations" and cringed when we were asked if our parents might visit the class and talk about their careers and educational experiences.

citizenship. I soon reached a mutual agreement with my guidance counselor at Stuyvesant that I would be better off at Brandeis, a comprehensive neighborhood high school located on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Despite its name, Brandeis served a predominantly poor and working-class black and Latino population (at that time schools were named without paying much attention to the culture and history of the surrounding community). I leapt at the chance to attend a school with my social and cultural peers. I must also admit an added incentive of leaving Stuyvesant was exchanging an all-boys school for the enhanced social opportunities at coeducational Brandeis.

Don't get me wrong. Going to school outside of Harlem exposed me to the successful actors, authors, scientists, diplomats, and artists who were the parents of my white classmates.

To students like me, integration came to mean sending a small phalanx of mostly poor black and Latino children to attend schools in white neighborhoods. I never took the opportunity to learn what integration meant to my white classmates and teachers, but it certainly did not mean asking any of them to take my place at P.S. 121 in East Harlem. Moreover, none of us, including teachers and parents from the sending and receiving schools, was given much preparation. My parents literally prayed that they were doing the right thing. Some of my white teachers and classmates shared their prayers, while others barely hid their discomfort or disdain.

If life as a disadvantaged minority student in an essentially white school was complicated, coming home provided little respite. Time spent away from my East Harlem neighborhood was time lost in the complex negotiations required to maintain one's social status — that is, being considered someone who could hold his own in sports, street games, adolescent verbal jockeying, and the occasional physical confrontation. Until my freshman year of high school, I attended "integrated" schools where I shouldered the dual burdens of learning a new culture while keeping up my "skills" in the neighborhood.

Don't get me wrong; the experience had a tremendous upside. Going to school outside of Harlem exposed me to the successful actors, authors, scientists, diplomats, and artists who were the parents of my white classmates; I was often invited to spend weekends at their homes. We were also taken on trips to nearby museums and universities. And I should mention that I was promoted to the highest track for 3rd grade and thereafter.

Nonetheless, by the time I reached Stuyvesant High School, I was tired of the effort and stress involved in maintaining dual

On my first day at Brandeis, however, I was shocked to discover that I was being placed in the honors program. I was not amused by the irony that most of my fellow "honors" classmates were white. Within three months, I fixed this problem by performing poorly enough to be dropped from the honors program.

On my graduation in 1969, with a mix of average grades yet perplexingly high SAT scores, I fit the profile that progressive white colleges were looking for in their efforts to integrate higher education. Inspired by Malcolm X—and recognizing the colleges' recruiting needs—I wrote an admissions essay entitled "Autobiography of a Ghetto Youth." I decided to attend Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and my essay was later published in the brochure the college used for recruiting minority youth. And just as I was beginning to think about doctoral studies, graduate schools were seeking to integrate their programs. I enrolled at Cornell. My story is not unique; a number of my friends had the opportunity to attend schools like Oberlin, Antioch, Cornell, and Bowdoin. From these elite institutions they often went on to law or graduate school.

However, while integration opened wonderful new vistas for my friends and me, we represented a lucky few. Most children in my neighborhood continued to live lives untouched by the promise of *Brown*. Indeed, by removing some of the most talented students and involved parents from P.S. 121, the busing program contributed to the school's severe decline in quality in the ensuing years—a pattern repeated in many urban schools with low-income, minority student populations. Many of the neighborhood children fell prey to the heroin epidemic and the crime and violence it spawned.

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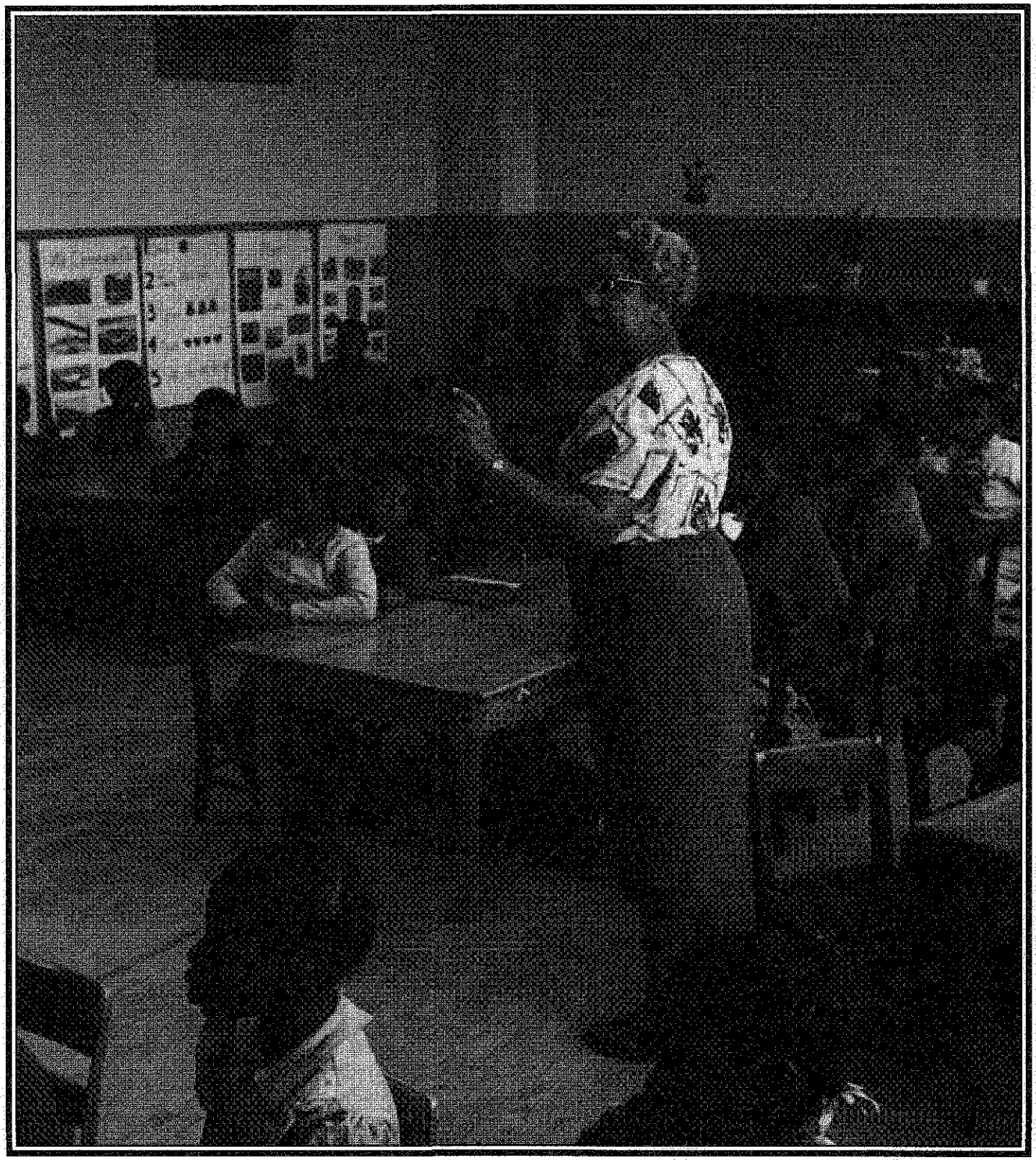

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT W. KELLEY, TIMELIFE PICTURES

The belief that black students could not learn in the absence of whites ignored the countless numbers of segregated schools that had produced the black professionals, farmers, and craftpersons who built vibrant communities despite being fettered by Jim Crow.

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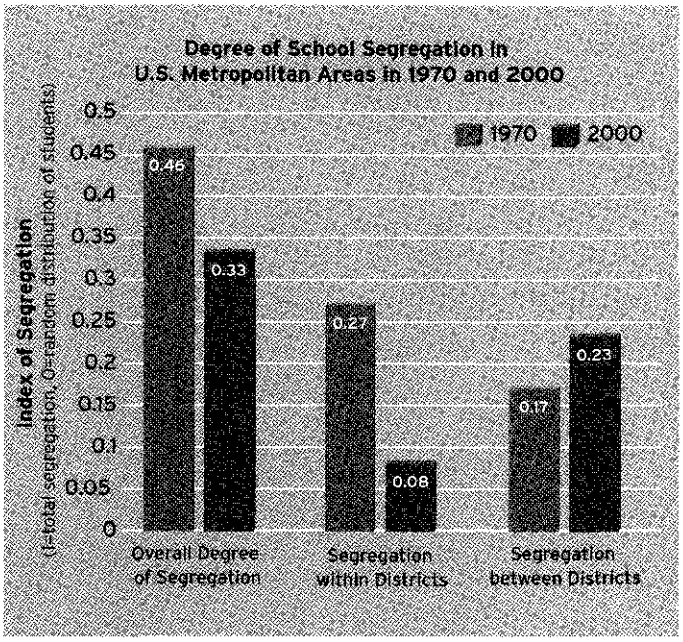
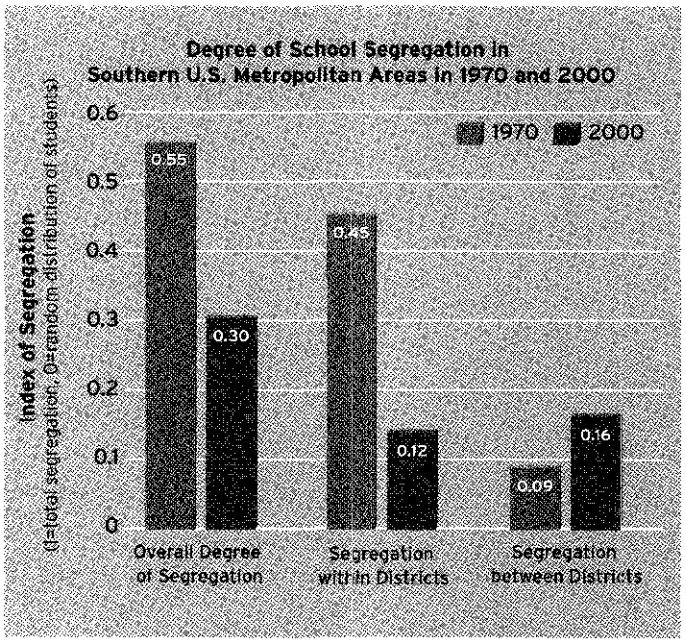
Where Are We Now? (Figure 1)

Segregation declined throughout the United States, especially in the South, between 1970 and 2000. However, the decline in segregation within school districts was partially offset by a growing degree of racial separation between school districts.





NOTE: The index of segregation can vary between 0 and 1; a score of 0 means that students are randomly distributed among schools, while a score of 1 indicates that students are completely segregated. The index is a measure of segregation of nonwhites from whites.

SOURCE: Charles T. Clotfelter, *After* Brown: *The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (2004)

Many of those who survived these neighborhood wars were drafted to fight in Vietnam. Others, like my two older brothers, graduated from neighborhood comprehensive or vocational high schools, returned from Vietnam, took blue-collar jobs, and began the social and economic trek from Harlem to homes in the suburbs.

Progress and Setbacks

There is no denying what legal scholar Charles Ogletree describes as the symbolic importance of *Brown*. The decision signaled the beginning of the end of federal strictures supporting injustice. In addition, the concerted efforts to desegregate schools in the wake of *Brown*, combined with the creation of federal compensatory education programs aimed at low-income households, coincided with a narrowing of the achievement gap between whites and blacks during the 1960s and 1970s.

Yet *Brown*'s power was attenuated by subsequent court decisions, policy choices, and social trends. For one thing, in the wake of the *Brown* decision, it took almost a year for the Warren Court to announce its remedy. Even then, the court ordered that schools be desegregated "with all deliberate speed." In practice, schools would deliberate without much speed. As Ogletree and Derrick Bell have observed, this remedy lacked the boldness of the original decision and left states and local communities to interpret what constituted adequate progress toward desegregation. This was meant to ease whites' resistance to integration by allowing states and localities to implement change over time. Perhaps this was prudent, but it enabled many communities, especially in the South, to exercise their prejudices by dragging their heels and resisting implementation of the law. After a decade of delay the federal government was forced to intervene in cities like Little Rock, Birmingham, and Boston, opening school doors with the barrel of a gun.

Time spent away from my East Harlem

holding one's own i

Moreover, when integration did occur, it usually traveled

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down a one-way street; white students were rarely asked to ride the bus to majority-black schools. This strategy placed the burden on the victims of discrimination, black children and their communities. Those black students who transferred to majority-white schools encountered a deeply hostile atmosphere where a range of practices kept them segregated, only now within the school's walls. White school personnel used policies such as curriculum tracking and special-education referrals as a means of sorting students by race under the guise of "ability grouping" or meeting students' "special needs." Now the barriers to integration, once visible in the maintenance of separate schools, became hidden behind the classroom door.

This highlighted a major weakness in the *Brown* decision: the assumption that African-Americans, if they attended integrated schools, would have access to the same high-quality education as their white counterparts. W. E. B. Du Bois presaged the fallacies underpinning this thinking when he observed in 1935:

> A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile public opinion, and not teaching of truth concerning black folk, is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries, and wretched housing is equally bad. Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader, more natural basis for the education of all youth. It gives wider contacts; it inspires greater self-confidence; and suppresses the inferiority complex. But other things seldom are equal, and in that case, Sympathy, Knowledge, and the Truth outweigh all that the mixed school can offer.

The Warren Court's belief that black students could not learn in the absence of whites ignored the countless numbers of segregated African-American schools that had produced the black business people, lawyers, doctors, writers, artists, farmers, and craftpersons who built vibrant communities despite being fettered by Jim Crow. By equating integration with equality of education, the *Brown* decision left all-black schools tainted with suspicions of inferiority while giving all-white schools an undeserved presumption of excellence.

Flawed as the reasoning and implementation of *Brown* were, the decision is not to blame for the demise of the integrationist ideal. New economic opportunities and the urban riots of the 1960s conspired to propel white families' flight to segregated cul-de-sacs in the suburbs (see Figure 1). The growing black middle class soon joined the exodus, leaving urban schools with the difficult task of educating the majority of the nation's poor and minority students. Moreover, the Supreme Court, in its 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* decision, ruled that the suburban districts around Detroit did not need to desegregate, on the grounds that they had never practiced explicit state-sponsored segregation. This decision constructed a fence around urban districts, making desegregation a hopeless dream rather than a realizable goal. Majority-minority school districts like Detroit's have little recourse beyond pursuing voluntary and fairly limited interdistrict busing (usually one-way) or, in a few instances (Chattanooga-Hamilton County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg are examples), consolidating urban and suburban districts.

Today segregation remains a fact of life in our nation's schools. According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project, it is also on the rise. Equally if not more disturbing is the fact that the black-white achievement gap began to widen again during the 1990s. The situation is particularly troublesome in urban schools, where performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress of the average black or Latino 17-year-old matches that of the average white 13-year-old. More than half of all black and Latino students in urban schools will fail to graduate from high school; many leave as early as 9th grade.

The achievement gap continues to survive even in some of our nation's most privileged communities, much to the dismay of the black and Latino parents who moved to the suburbs to acquire immunity from the ills of high-poverty urban schools. Studies show a familiar pattern: middle-income black and Latino students faring worse than their white counterparts with respect to grades, enrollment in advanced courses, and performance on standardized tests. These findings confirm the fallacy of equating integration with quality.

If the 50 years since *Brown* have taught us anything, it is that inequality has multiple roots that are deeply embedded in the soil of America's educational, social, governmental, cultural, and spiritual life. Uprooting the problem will require a multipronged approach that addresses inequalities across the board and focuses on improving not just schools but entire communities. We must not abandon integration as a goal, but it is utopian to believe that schools alone can close an achievement gap that is the result of deeper economic and social inequities.

neighborhood was time lost in sports, street games and adolescent jockeying.

Warren Simmons is the executive director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

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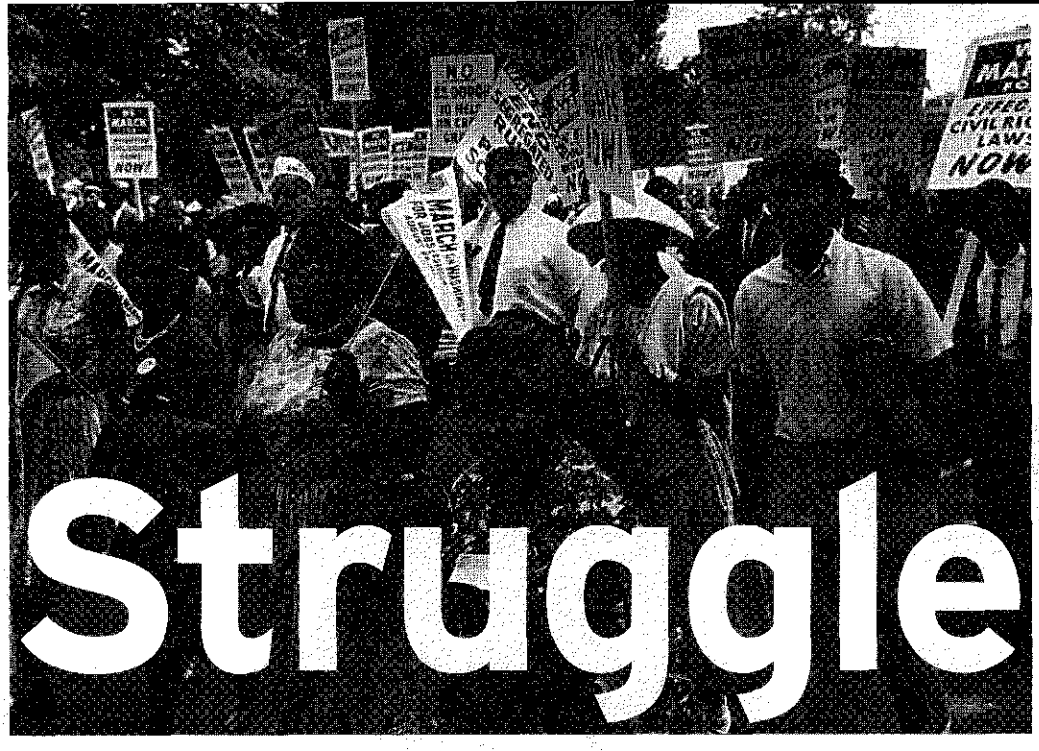

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The Struggle Continues

BY HOWARD FULLER

Brown v. Board of Education ended legally sanctioned segregation, but the decision's promise awaits fulfillment

Relatively few people, black or white, who know anything about the reality of race relations in America during the 1950s would contest the revolutionary nature of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, 50 years later, scholars are asking whether *Brown* has done more harm than good. The answer is no . . . but with qualifications.

There is no denying *Brown*'s contribution to ending the evil system of legal segregation and racial oppression in the United States. As Richard Kluger, author of *Simple Justice*, pointed out, "The Supreme Court had taken pains to limit the language of *Brown* to segregation in public schools only. . . . But it became almost immediately clear that *Brown* in effect wiped out all forms of state-sanctioned segregation."

Until 1954 the "separate but equal" doctrine enshrined in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision defined the national norm. In the South, racial oppression was unrelenting, backed by the legal system and nurtured by the mores that could be traced back to our country's slave era. In the North, de facto segregation and covert discrimination were commonplace. Everywhere, black people were expected to stay in "their place."

These various forms of prejudice and discrimination had devastating consequences for black people. Consider that in 1954 the neonatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births was 17.8 for whites and 27.0 for "Negro and other." Maternal mortality rates per 10,000 live births were 3.7 for whites, 14.4 for "Negro and other." The average black household income in 1955 ($2,890) was 55 percent of that of white households ($5,228). In 1952, the illiteracy rate for blacks 14 years of age or older (10.2 percent) was more than five times that of whites (1.8 percent). More than a quarter of black males (28 percent) completed no more than four

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years of schooling, compared with less than 9 percent of white males (see Figures 1 & 2).

Beyond these statistics were the demeaning and oppressive rules and social customs that served as daily reminders of black people's second-class status. There were the "rules of separation"—the colored and white bathrooms, water fountains, and waiting rooms; the fact that black people were forced to sit in the back of the bus and to step off the sidewalks when white people approached. There was the indignity of still being called "boy" at the age of 65.

Lifting the Veil of Oppression

For many people, *Brown* marked a critical turning point in addressing these inequities. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot remembers its impact vividly, writing:

> Through a child's eyes, I could see the veil of oppression lift from my parents' shoulders. It seemed they were standing taller. And for the first time in my life, I saw tears in my father's eyes. "This is a great and important day," he said reverently to his children. And although we had not lived the pain and struggle of his life, nor did we understand the meaning of his words, the emotion and drama of that moment still survives in my soul today.

It seemed to her father and to many others that the United States was finally on the way to creating a society where discrimination based on race was unacceptable. The decision was certainly one of the sparks that stoked the flame of the civil-rights movement in the late 1950s and 1960s. It gave hope to tens of thousands of black people and their allies, who moved forward with courage and determination to transform American society.

In no small measure, these struggles changed America for black people. African-Americans today hold high-level positions in the government and private sector. Black hip-hop performers are a major force in defining the nation's youth culture. The University of Kentucky now starts five black basketball players coached by a black man. These achievements were beyond the aspirations and certainly the reach of black people in 1954, irrespective of their academic records or life experiences.

Nonetheless, while it is clear that the *Brown* decision did more good than harm, it is equally clear that 50 years after the decision much of the promise of *Brown* still awaits fulfillment. The foundation for some of the questions and doubts about the decision's legacy can be found in two separate but interrelated conceptual flaws inherent in *Brown*.

First, the *Brown* decision, while ending legally sanctioned segregation, did not (maybe could not) address the fundamental disparities in power inherent in a society where "white skin privilege" dominated. The decision did not prevent racists from using a variety of legal tactics and their control of law-enforcement agencies to resist the implementation of *Brown*. When desegregation did occur, it was almost always on terms favorable to whites. For instance, while black schools had to be closed (leading to demotions or the loss of jobs for black teachers and administrators), whites were given access to specialty schools or allowed to remain in their neighborhood schools. Likewise, new forms of "tracking" students were put into place to protect white children from "ill prepared" black children.

The second flaw arose from the view that equal education was not possible without integration. "The basic postulate of our strategy and theory in *Brown*," said Robert Carter, the general counsel for the NAACP who played a major role in organizing the social-science testimony that was vital in the case, "was that the elimination of enforced segregated education would necessarily result in equal education."

However, Carter and his colleagues did not consider the likelihood that black children would be placed in environments where the people who were being asked to teach them had no respect for them or their families. They did not realize all the ways educators could avoid teaching children whose education was of no interest to them. They did not grasp the capacity of those in charge to set up segregated classrooms and segregated activities within desegregated schools; to develop various ways of categorizing black students so that the best courses were reserved for white kids; and to concoct theories that essentially blamed the children and their families for the schools' failure to teach them.

Moreover, the very idea that desegregating schools was the exclusive means of achieving equality assumed that black institutions and perhaps even black people were inferior. The language of *Brown* subtly reinforced this belief, stating, "Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect on colored children." The court cited

The idea that desegregating schools was

achieving equalit

Kenneth Clark's famous doll experiment, which claimed to uncover self-hatred among black children and attributed it to the degrading effects of being taught in segregated schools. The court also quoted Gunnar Myrdal, who wrote in *An American Dilemma*, "[American Negro] culture is a distorted development, or a pathological condition, of the general American culture."

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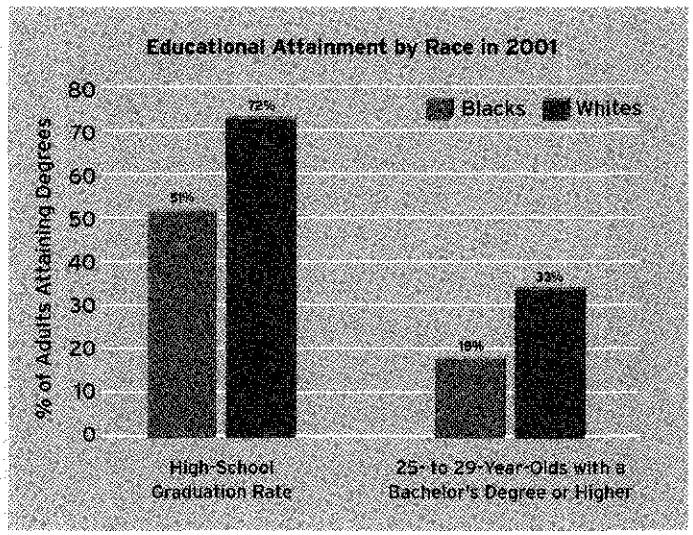
Substantial Differences in Graduation Rates Remain (Figure 1)

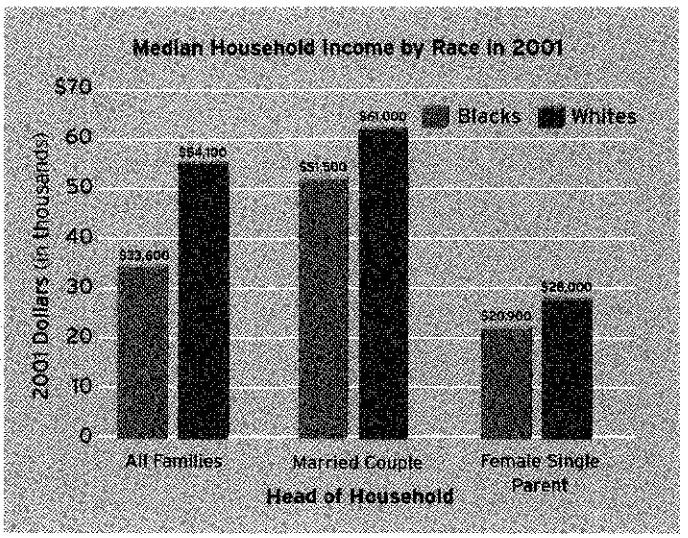
Barely half of all African-American students graduate from high school in four years, while less than a fifth attain a bachelor's degree by the age of 30.



SOURCES: Jay Greene and Greg Forster, Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the U.S., Manhattan Institute for Policy Research; U.S. Department of Education

Inequality Persists (Figure 2)

Household income among African-American families continues to trail that of white families by a significant margin. This is due in part to the high percentage of black households that are headed by single females (43 percent, versus 14 percent of white families).



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Given these views, it followed that the only hope for black students to get a good education was to be rescued from their inferior institutions and pathologies and placed in integrated schools. And an integrated school was defined as one that was predominantly white. This ideology masked the inequities that existed in many so-called integrated schools.

Unfinished Business

Recent statistics make it clear that black people are still struggling to enjoy the fruits of equal educational opportunity, despite the gains since *Brown*. On the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress, just 40 percent of black 4th graders scored at or above the "basic" level in reading, compared with 75 percent of white students. At the 8th-grade level, 54 percent of black students scored at or above basic, compared with 83 percent of white students. Just 51 percent of black students graduate from high school; the graduation rate among white students is 72 percent (see Figure 1).

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assumed that black institutions were inferior.

Moreover, these educational inequalities help to explain enduring economic inequalities. For example, in 1998, 48 percent of black children age six and younger lived in families that were below 125 percent of the poverty line, compared with 24 percent of white children. The median household income for black families in 2001 was $33,600, while it was $54,100 for whites, a difference that can be attributed in part to the large number of black families headed by a single parent (see Figure 2). Although these conditions represent vast improvements from those of the 1950s, the differences in well-being between whites and blacks remain a stain on the nation.

So the struggle continues to make America a place where black people and black institutions are respected; where integration is viewed through the prism of pluralist acceptance; and where low-income and working-class black families have the power to secure the kind of education they desire for their children. The *Brown* decision sent a powerful message by tearing down the legal structures of oppression, but there remains plenty of unfinished business.

Howard L. Fuller is the director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University and chairman of the board of directors of the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

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Selling SUPPLEMENTAL Services

BY SIOBHAN GORMAN

During the summer of 2002, Martha Fritchley was leafing through the Yellow Pages in search of tutoring firms. As an assistant superintendent of the Hall County school system in Georgia, Fritchley needed to enlist firms to tutor children in four underperforming schools in order to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. She was particularly interested in home-based tutoring, and she happened on the local franchise of a company called Club Z.

Can school districts regulate the growing tutoring industry while also serving as a major provider?

Fritchley called the franchise's owner, Scott Morchower. While Morchower was unaware of the new federal law's tutoring provision, he was of course receptive to the idea. He offered his services to several more districts as well, becoming the sole provider in the 2002–03 academic year of tutoring services for Forsyth County's 75 struggling students. Some of those students jumped as many as three grade levels.

"The results we came out with were awesome," says Morchower. So awesome, in fact, that he worked himself out of a contract: all the schools in Forsyth County left the failing schools list, meaning that their students were no longer eligible for tutoring services. During the 2002–03 school year, students in the supplemental services program made up 20 percent of his business; Morchower figured they would account for 40 percent in 2003–04. Instead, they again made up 20 percent. With such an unpredictable flow of clients, how should Morchower factor children from the federal program into his business plan? "I wish I knew," he says. "That's the $10 million question."

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL WITTE

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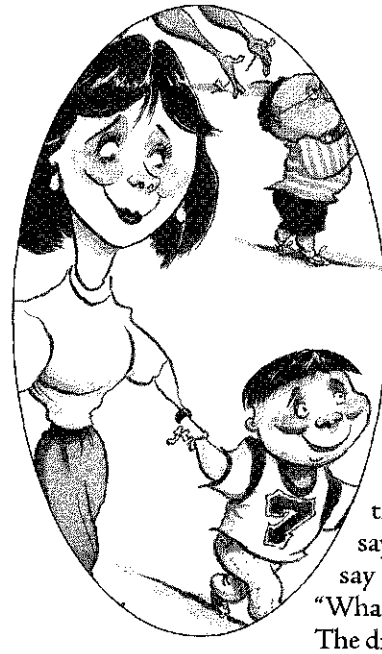
School districts have little incentive to inform parents of the money available to them for tutoring, since districts get to keep any unused funds.



By some estimates it's actually the $2 billion question. That's how much additional revenue some tutoring providers say could be up for grabs in this new federally funded marketplace. But so far, less than 10 percent of eligible students are electing to participate, according to providers' estimates. Morchower said one of his toughest challenges is convincing parents that the service is free to them. Parents will often hang up on him because they think he's a telemarketer, he says. And sometimes parents simply don't want to acknowledge that their child needs help. "Even when I come out to the house, they ask, 'What's wrong with my kid?'" Morchower says.

These tutoring services, known in the law as "supplemental services," arguably represent the federal government's largest free-market experiment in education. In the rush to capture market share, more than 1,000 tutoring providers have signed up for the program. But market uncertainty, combined with differences in how school districts are administering the law, has produced some extremely rocky terrain for these firms. While most providers maintain an optimistic if-you-build-it-they-will-come mindset, the unevenness of parental participation and program implementation is causing significant anxiety.

The New Marketplace

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, supplemental educational services are funded by school districts with a portion of their allocation from the U.S. Department of Education. Georgia was early to implement its program; most states were just getting on board during the 2003–04 academic year.

States first approve a group of tutoring providers. Then districts draw up their own contract with a subset of those providers; districts themselves can also serve as providers. Once the districts notify parents of their options, parents can enroll with a provider of their choosing.

Within this new marketplace, school districts hold enormous power as a result of their dual role—as both program administrator and potential provider. Districts also have little incentive to inform parents of the money available to them for tutoring, since districts get to keep any unused funds. Some providers allege that districts are not actually setting aside the money as required by law. "We've seen districts where the federal per-pupil allocation says it's $1,800 and the district will say it's $1,100," said one provider. "What happens to that other $700?"

The district's dual role also gives rise to a conflict of interest. The concern is that districts enjoy an unfair advantage over other providers because of their direct access to parents. Jeffrey Cohen, president of Catapult Learning (the tutoring firm formerly known as Sylvan Education Solutions), says that he has seen letters sent out by the district that automatically sign children up for the district's program unless the parent affirmatively decides to go with a different provider. "There's not a level playing field," he says.

To overcome these obstacles, most large providers are going around the districts by beefing up their own marketing efforts. Some providers, like Catapult Learning, are running ads and touting their programs with leaflets or promoters who go door-to-door, to shopping malls, and, when allowed, to the school.

Before No Child Left Behind, about $2 billion was spent each year in the retail tutoring market, according to Educate Inc., a national tutoring company formerly known as Sylvan Learning Systems and Catapult Learning's parent company. Half of the tutoring providers were small local companies and individuals, while the other half were regional or national firms. In addition to the retail tutoring market, a few companies, such as Catapult Learning, made an effort to promote public-private partnerships in tutoring, but the marketplace was not well defined.

It has been difficult to get a handle on the scope of the market for publicly funded tutoring created by the No Child Left Behind Act because the program is new and has so many moving parts. According to the U.S. Department of Education, private firms represented 72 percent of providers as of spring 2004. Of all providers, 6 percent were faith-based institutions and 10 percent were online tutoring firms. About a quarter of the providers were part of the public school system. Within a given state, public schools represent anywhere from zero to 80 percent of the providers. Likewise, among the states, online providers compose anywhere from zero to 47 percent of the available options.

This nascent marketplace has all the components of a high-school melodrama; there is the popular crowd, the bullies, the

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overachievers, the earnest do-gooders, and the geeks. (The leading roles are played, in order, by large corporate tutoring providers; school districts; smaller national providers; local, largely nonprofit organizations; and online tutors.) At present, large corporate providers and school districts seem to be ruling the marketplace. And their shares are likely to increase as the program matures because of their ability to meet market demands. But without a chaperone in this new free-market niche in public education, it's been a schoolyard free-for-all.

The Popular Crowd

Jeffrey Cohen was following the supplemental services program long before it became law. As president of Catapult Learning, Cohen saw enormous potential for expansion under a federally funded tutoring program because it mirrored what he had already been doing for 15 years—partnering with low-income schools to bolster their academic programs.

With their glossy brochures and brand recognition, large corporate providers are the popular kids. While there are 60 corporate tutoring providers that can be considered national firms, only a handful of them are real players. This small, elite group has the potential to garner a large market share because many of its members are approved in 20 to 30 states. They have also been tutoring K–12 clients for many years. So these companies are well positioned to scale up their business without enormous start-up costs, enabling them to take advantage of a growing, if unpredictable, market.

Catapult Learning's business model in this new marketplace is largely the same as before, with one exception: while Cohen deals solely with schools in his regular business, under supplemental services, he must get approved by the state, contract with a district, and then sell his product directly to parents.

Cohen says the supplemental services program offers him two opportunities: 1) to reach many more children, whose schools would not otherwise pay for Catapult's services; and 2) to build relationships with school districts, which could lead to further business outside the federal program.

At the beginning of the 2003–04 school year, Catapult Learning was approved in 31 states. During the year, the firm served 25,000 students through the supplemental services program, up from 6,000 students the previous year. Catapult charges anywhere between $40 and $80 an hour. In the coming years, Cohen says his supplemental services enrollment will be in the "tens of thousands"; down the line, it could double his pre–supplemental services enrollment of 70,000 students. So far, though, Catapult remains in investment mode. "The first year, the program certainly wasn't profitable," Cohen says. His strategy is to ensure that Catapult is operating in as many locations as possible so that it is poised to take advantage of new business as parental demand picks up.

In contrast to Catapult's efforts to market directly to parents, Princeton Review, which is now approved in 27 states, has taken a school-based tack, negotiating with districts in the hopes of becoming a district's or a school's sole provider. The goal is to avoid the headaches of working with school districts that are dragging their feet in implementing their programs. "I don't look at this as a retail business, like putting up billboards on the highways," says Rob Cohen, executive vice president of the company's K–12 division. "I'm looking for districts to call us up."

During the 2003–04 school year, Princeton Review served 6,000 supplemental services students. Within the next few years, Cohen says his company could be serving as many as 10,000. "I believe we're running supplemental services, on a marginal basis, profitably today," he says.

A third strategy among big tutoring companies—a strategy popular among retail tutoring companies that operate from a storefront, like Huntington Learning Centers—is to continue just as they have been doing. These companies get state approval, contract with districts, and then open their doors. Transportation to these tutoring centers, which are often located in suburban strip malls, is up to the parents. For companies like Huntington, says Russ Miller, vice president for new business development, this presents the biggest challenge: getting students to come. Huntington is evaluating two new options for reaching supplemental services students. One is to establish centers in urban areas. The other is to partner with schools—in a strategy similar to Princeton Review's—to make the school a kind of learning center.

Competitors expected one player in this category, Edison Schools, to jump into the market immediately. Instead, Edison did not begin marketing itself as a tutoring provider until the late spring of 2003, after a year long research effort. So far, the national school-management firm has gotten approved in only 15 states. Nonetheless, largely due to the contract Edison signed with the New York City school system, its enrollment has grown quickly: the firm served 12,500 students in the 2003–04 school year, said Joel Rose, who heads up Edison's supplemental services division, known as Newton Learning. Edison is among the companies with the most to gain from a successful supplemental services program because its core business depends on building relationships with school districts.

The Bullies

John Liechty knows a market when he sees one. At the beginning of the 2003–04 school year, 186,000 of the nearly 750,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District were eligible for supplemental services (see Table 1). As the associate superintendent for extended-day programs, Liechty wanted to keep the tutoring money in the district. He also saw the program as a chance to tap new ideas from private companies. So he applied to the state to be a supplemental services provider

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Approved Supplemental Services Providers in Chicago and Los Angeles for the 2004–05 School Year

Chicago Public Schools

 # Eligible for Tutoring Services:
270,000 of Chicago's 440,000 students
At Stake: Under NCLB, the district must use at least 20 percent of its $263 million in Title I-A funding for supplemental services and choice programs.
In 2003-04: 57,000 of 133,000 eligible students received tutoring
% Tutored by Chicago Public Schools in 2003-04: 74 percent

Approved Providers:

Chicago School District
Achieve3000
Babbage Net School, Inc.
Brainfuse Online Instruction
Cambridge Educational Services
CS&C-Julex Learning
EdSolutions, Inc.
Failure Free Reading
Gateway Learning Center
HOSTS Learning
Huntington Learning Centers, Inc.
I CAN Learn Education System
Kaplan K12 Learning Services
Kumon North America, Inc.
Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes
One-to-One Learning Center
Princeton Review, Inc.
Progressive Learning
Reading In Motion
SCORE! Educational Centers, Inc.
Socratic Learning, Inc.
Sylvan Learning Systems, Inc.
Ventures Education Systems Corp.
Teachers Academy for Math & Science
Wicker Park Learning Center

Los Angeles Unified School District

 # Eligible for Tutoring Services:
230,000 of L.A.'s 750,000 students
At Stake: Under NCLB, the district must use at least 20 percent of its $361 million in Title I-A funding for supplemental services and choice programs.
In 2003-04: 18,550 of 186,000 eligible students received tutoring
% Tutored by LAUSD in 2003-04: 66 percent

Approved Providers:

Beyond the Bell Learning Centers (LAUSD)
A+ Educational
ABC-Learn, Inc.
Advanced Academics Inc.
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
Brainfuse One-to-One Tutoring
Bresee Foundation
Century/Learning Initiatives for Today
Club Z! In-Home Tutoring
Education Station, A Sylvan Partnership
Educational & Tutoring Services
Failure Free Reading
Huntington Learning Centers, Inc.
Kumon Math & Reading Centers
Math*Ability, Inc.
Newton Learning
People Making Progress - Chess/Test Tutors
Professional Tutors of America, Inc.
Project IMPACT
Say Yes! To Life
SCORE! Educational Centers, Inc.
SmartKids Tutoring & Learning Centers
SMARTHINKING, Inc.
Tutors of the Inland Empire

SOURCES: Chicago Public Schools; Illinois State Board of Education; Los Angeles Unified School District; *Chicago Sun-Times*; *Chicago Tribune*

and then designed a Saturday school program that would contract out the curriculum and teaching to private providers.

While each district's reach is limited in scope, school districts, with their ability to be a provider and to control the districtwide funding, have an enormous amount of control over the tutoring options available. That level of control offers up the opportunity for districts to bully other providers, and they are wielding that power in both obvious and subtle ways. Some districts, like Los Angeles, use their status to contract with private providers. Others, like Toledo Public Schools, have opted to develop their own programs.

In Los Angeles, about two-thirds of the 18,550 students who signed up for tutoring in the 2003–04 school year joined the district's "Beyond the Bell" program (the other third signed up directly with the provider of their choice). Liechty is responsible for running the district's tutoring program and for administering the supplemental services program, which includes 24 different providers who have signed contracts with the district.

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Each of the district's six tutoring centers is run by a different company, like Kaplan or CompassLearning. "Each one of those centers becomes almost a lab," Liechty says. "I'm looking for everybody and anybody to partner with." Liechty says the benefit of this arrangement is that the district can exercise more quality control and can bargain down the price. Liechty hopes to increase enrollment in the next several years to between 20,000 and 25,000 students. He also needs to figure out how to meet the children's needs without dipping into general district funds. So far, he is operating at a deficit, which he estimated at somewhere between $40,000 and $400,000.

Liechty says that while he tries to run the district's program fairly, he acknowledges that the district has an inside track with parents. "We don't hide that," he says. "There's no question the district is going to have an advantage." In addition, the money going to private providers comes out of a pot of federal money that districts have historically counted as their own, and they are understandably reluctant to lose those funds.

The Overachievers

Mark Lucas was skeptical about the opportunities presented by the new federal tutoring program. As the CEO and founder of Club Z's national operation, he wasn't sure the federal money would ever reach the pockets of for-profit providers. But when some Club Z franchises were awarded contracts, Lucas's royalties increased tenfold. That got his attention.

Meet the overachievers. Club Z is one of a number of smaller, national corporate players that have an opportunity to tap into an important niche: parents who want the reliability of a national company but the feel of a local tutor.

Launched in 1995, Club Z's claim to fame is that it offers in-home tutoring. Across the country, Club Z's regular program serves 50,000 students a year. After Lucas saw the surge in royalty checks, he decided the whole company should get into supplemental services, and he applied for state approval. In the 2003–04 school year, Club Z was approved in 25 states and served 7,000 children through the supplemental services program. That's more than competitive with his more-established counterparts. Lucas anticipates that within two years, he'll be serving around 10,000 students through supplemental services.

"One of the reasons we're so popular is we go to the home," Lucas says. How can he do it? Club Z trains a bevy of local tutors and then calls on them as needed and pays them only for the hours they work. Overhead costs are minimal, and Lucas says that Club Z is able to attract better tutors because it pays them half of the $35 hourly rate. He says that compares favorably with his larger competitors, which pay their tutors around $9 an hour. And Club Z isn't much more expensive than, say, Princeton Review, which charges around $25 an hour. So Club Z offers parents fewer hours of tutoring, but one-on-one and at home.

The Earnest Do-Gooders

The federal tutoring program has been a boon for Pastor Darius Pridgen at True Bethel Baptist Church in Buffalo, New York. A former school board member, Pridgen started a math tutoring program at his church four years ago to help students pass New York's graduation requirement. But with a $4,000 budget and an all-volunteer tutoring force, the program was "mediocre," Pridgen says. But after a state assemblyman suggested he take advantage of the federal tutoring money, Pridgen says, "the picture has changed dramatically." After it joined forces with the housing project next door—home to many children who attend a failing school nearby—True Bethel's program doubled in size from 50 to 100 children.

A number of community-based groups, including YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and churches, have added or expanded tutoring operations because of the federal tutoring money. Similarly, a number of 21st Century Community

A small group of corporate providers has the potential to garner a large market share because many of them are approved in 20 to 30 states.

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Learning Centers, established by the federal government in the 1990s to provide after-school care, are entering the supplemental services market.

Nonprofits such as these may represent the largest proportion of providers nationwide because they're the clean-up crew. When the national companies decide a given area isn't going to boost their bottom line, local organizations are the only option parents have outside the public schools.

At True Bethel, Pridgen has switched from volunteer to hired tutors, and a certified teacher is on-site during the after-school program—all enabled by the new $100,000 budget, $80,000 of which comes from supplemental services. A member of the congregation, a math teacher, offered to work with a few colleagues to write the curriculum. While the program was previously available only to members of the congregation, this one is open to everyone, and the church provides limited transportation with its own bus.

The Geeks

In the spring of 2002, Massachusetts's state department of education called Burck Smith. His start-up company, SMARTHINKING, offered live, online, one-on-one tutoring 24 hours a day to college students. Department officials asked if SMARTHINKING would be able to offer a similar service for struggling 10th graders who needed to pass the state test. Smith, who had founded SMARTHINKING in 1999, thought he'd give it a shot. "We'd always thought we'd move into high-school tutoring," he said. "The overlap between high school and college tutoring is really dramatic."

The geeks are doggedly trying to make virtual tutoring as good as the real thing. Representing perhaps less than 1 percent of the more than 1,000 unique providers nationally and 10 percent of the 1,718 approved providers in each state, online tutoring firms are still an unknown quantity. But they could fill an important niche in serving students who don't want to or can't get to a site-based provider. Other major providers, such as Catapult Learning, are exploring ways to establish online tutoring services.

SMARTHINKING is now approved in 15 states, and it served 200 children during the 2003–04 academic year, though Smith had hoped to reach 800. He attributes the low turnout to increased competition from other providers in the program's second year. Smith is facing the same low-participation problems as his competitors, but he has a unique problem with attendance. Smith learned from his program in Massachusetts that students are more likely to attend when they have to show up at a supervised center to log in. So he's pursuing that option where possible.

Nevertheless, Smith believes that his online business model is perfect for the supplemental services program. While other companies need a critical mass of students to ensure profitability, Smith doesn't. Furthermore, he has no fixed costs associated with delivering his program—beyond what he has already spent to develop the software. SMARTHINKING has quality advantages, too, says Smith. With a decentralized business model, he can get higher-quality employees; more than 80 percent of his tutors have master's or doctoral degrees. He also provides Spanish-speaking tutors when necessary. And it's no trouble to bring his services to scale if there's a surge in interest. In a few years, Smith hopes to be serving 10,000 supplemental services students.

Survival of the Largest

As this marketplace matures, both experts and a number of providers say two big winners will emerge: corporate providers and school districts. Those organizations possess the greatest resources, the greatest capacity to reach parents and children, and the scale to absorb the unpredictability inherent in this marketplace.

Ultimately, those two groups may join forces. A number of large corporate providers said that the supplemental services program may end up looking a lot like the one in Los Angeles, in which the district contracts with a few big companies to deliver the tutoring. "I think the largest provider nationwide will be schools," says Rob Cohen of Princeton Review. "They have all the teachers. They have all the buildings." And they have the greatest ability to deliver the children.

Cohen thinks this is a good thing. While he acknowledges that providing the services directly to children is more profitable, he may be able to get a greater share of a new market that sells materials to public schools than he can in the current marketplace. "Providing services to the No. 1 provider [districts] is going to be a fine place to be in the market," he says. And it may well be the best way to ensure that the districts have incentives both to participate and to monitor private providers.

In this Darwin-meets-public-education school reform, performance will (hopefully) matter a lot, too. That detail is not lost on most large providers. "The playing field has grown tremendously. Those who will rise to the top will be those who are getting results," said Huntington's Miller. "They're going to gauge the results by their test scores' going up. That's going to be the bottom line: Did the scores improve, and if they did, which provider did the student work with?"

That's the ideal, anyway.

Siobhan Gorman is a staff correspondent with National Journal.

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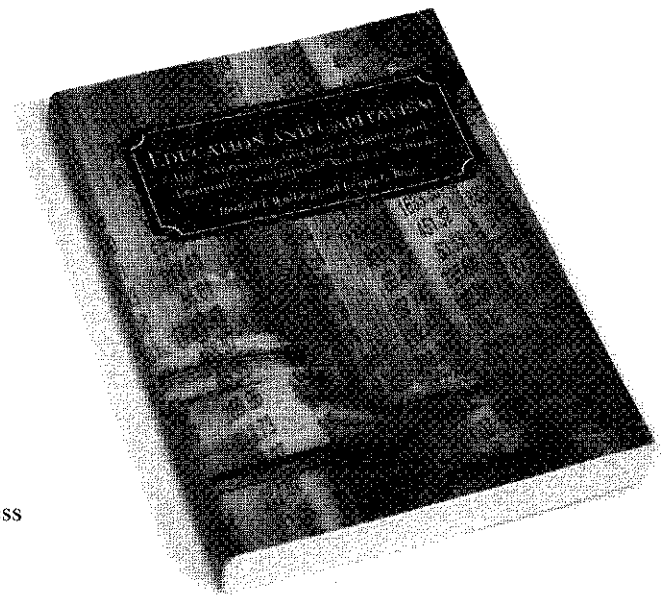
Can Markets and Economics Improve America's Schools?



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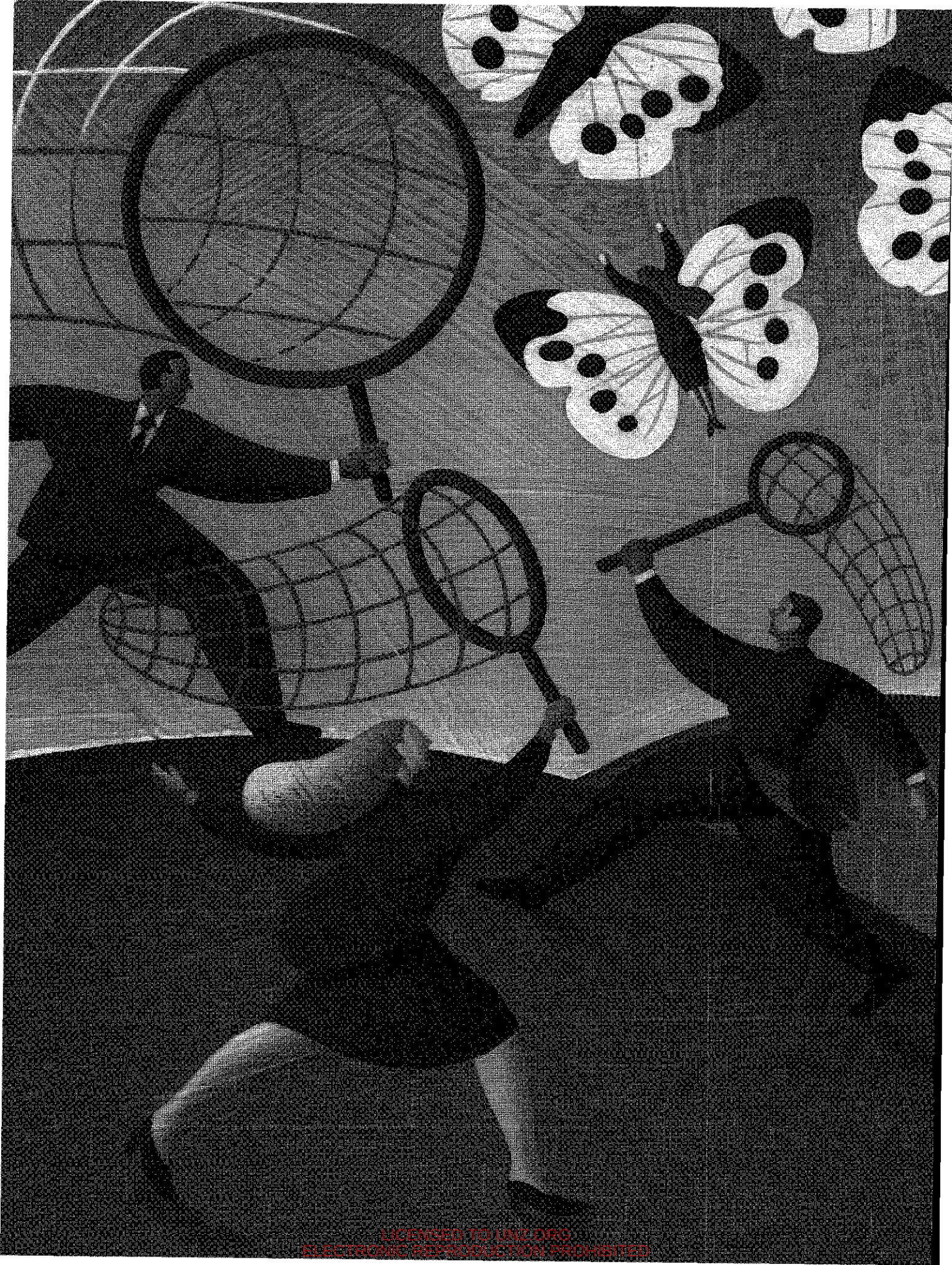

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feature

Netting an Elusive Breed

Disadvantaged schools need better teachers. Here's how to attract and retain them

BY MARK WARNER

If there is one lesson I learned before being elected governor of Virginia in 2001, it is that the most important asset of any enterprise is the talent and enthusiasm of its workforce. In operating a successful business, there is no greater challenge than to attract and retain the best-qualified, hardest-working employees.

To accomplish this, businesses must offer competitive compensation and benefit packages, positive working environments, and opportunities for employees to gain more responsibility and to upgrade their skills.

However, perhaps the most important factors in keeping the best people are providing workers with the tools to succeed at what they do and ensuring that they feel a sense of respect and empowerment about their work. Businesses that fail to offer these things will lose their brightest employees to competitors that do.

Having learned these lessons firsthand as a business owner, I am determined as a governor to apply them to the single greatest challenge facing our public schools today—the challenge of providing the best possible teachers to students in our lowest-achieving schools.

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM NIKLEWICZ

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Learning from Success

Teachers are by far the most important factor in a school's success. On this point the research is clear. For instance, a 1991 study conducted in Texas found that the quality of a school's teachers exerted the single greatest influence on achievement outside of students' family background. A 1996 study conducted in Tennessee found that students who had three good teachers in a row improved their performance markedly. By contrast, those who had the misfortune to be placed in classrooms with three bad teachers in a row saw their achievement levels plummet. In a review of the research literature, University of Washington scholar Dan Goldhaber concluded, "It appears that the most important thing a school can do is to provide its students with good teachers" (see "The Mystery of Good Teaching" in the Spring 2002 issue).

In designing policies aimed at attracting and retaining the good teachers, what policymakers must not forget is that teachers are no different from employees in the private sector. They want to succeed in their jobs and they demand the tools, the respect, and the sense of empowerment necessary to reach this goal. If a school does not provide these elements, the best teachers will find one that does.

All of the existing incentives run counter to efforts to reward good teaching and get good teachers where we most need them.

In this regard, it is important to recognize that among teachers, money is not always the main concern in deciding where to teach. In a Public Agenda survey, more than 85 percent of teachers indicated that they would choose a school with well-behaved students and supportive parents over one where they would earn a significantly higher salary.

Unfortunately, schools serving low-income and minority students are often at a competitive disadvantage in trying to meet their employees' needs. For instance, just 35 percent of teachers in schools with large minority student populations say their school is "very good" when it comes to having a safe and respectful atmosphere, compared with 68 percent of teachers in schools with few minority students.

The result is that children who attend high-poverty and/or high-minority schools are:

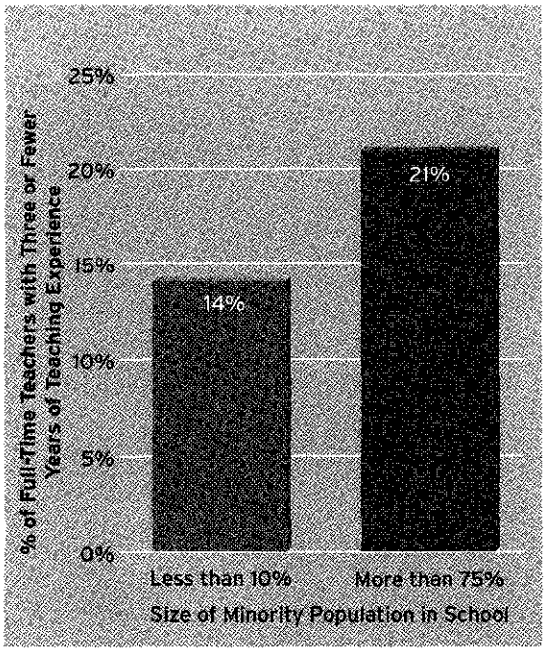
- More likely than other children to be taught by an inexperienced teacher (see Figure 1);
- More likely to be taught by teachers who were low achievers in college;
- More likely—in every single subject area—to be taught by teachers who did not major or even minor in the subjects they are teaching (see Figure 2);
- Considerably less likely to be taught by a fully certified teacher;
- Far more likely to be in a school that suffers from extremely high rates (30 to 50 percent a year) of teacher turnover.

The consequences—scandalously low achievement levels and high dropout rates among disadvantaged youth—are well known. But what can be done?

To begin, we must learn from success. Organizations such as the Education Trust have identified hundreds of schools across the country where disadvantaged kids routinely buck the trend of underperformance. For instance, the student body at Samuel W. Tucker Elementary in Alexandria, Virginia, is 68 percent minority and 53 percent low income. Yet in 2002 the school

Jumping Ship (Figure 1)

High employee turnover in schools with large minority enrollments means less-experienced teachers in the classroom.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, 1999–2000 school year

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outperformed 92 percent of all elementary schools in Virginia in reading and 86 percent of all elementary schools in math. Likewise, the 7th and 8th graders at Hambrick Middle School in Aldine, Texas, have placed in the top fifth of all Texas middle schools in reading and math over a three-year period, despite being 94 percent minority and 85 percent low income.

The key question for policymakers is therefore not whether it is possible to bring dramatic improvement to hard-to-staff schools. The question is how to learn from the existing success stories and from effective private-sector employment practices, and how to bring these lessons to scale for schools across the country.

Creating Innovative Policies

Shortages of qualified teachers in subjects like math, science, special education, and foreign languages, along with the impending retirements of an entire generation of teachers, make recruiting teachers to hard-to-staff schools even more challenging. Improving salaries is one important option, but many states still have fiscal problems that prevent them from approving costly new expenditures.

The real opportunity lies in improving the working conditions in hard-to-staff schools. This strategy includes several key elements:

- Reward teachers for higher performance. In my state, as in virtually all other states, teachers can earn more money in one of only a few ways: by accumulating college credits (even when those credits have nothing to do with what they are teaching); by accumulating more years of experience (even if that experience doesn't make them any better); or by transferring to a more affluent school district that pays higher salaries. All of the existing incentives, therefore, run counter to any effort to reward good teaching and get good teachers where we most need them.

We need to significantly modify the current incentive structure. Like professionals in other fields, teachers ought to be rewarded for achieving results—in this case, based on their effectiveness in producing student learning. They ought to be paid more for taking on our most important challenges. And they ought to be able to increase their salary by maximizing both their impact and their level of challenge. A salary structure modified along these lines would place the emphasis where it belongs—on rewarding our most effective, hardest-working teachers.

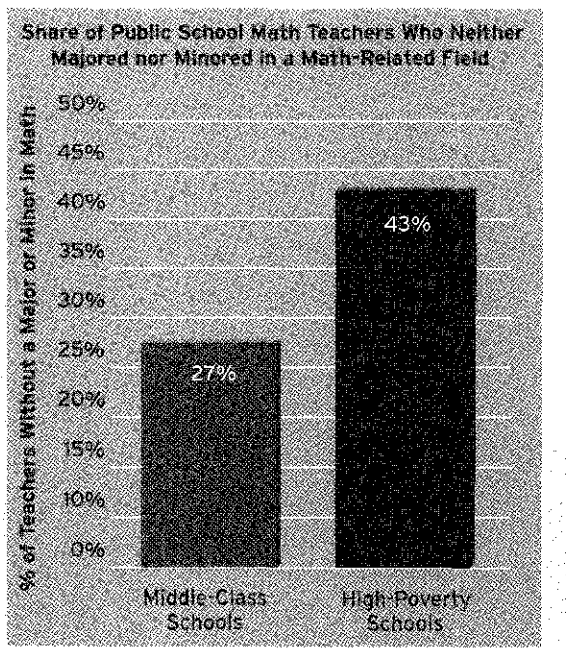
Like professionals in other fields, teachers ought to be rewarded for achieving results.

There are isolated examples of school districts that reward teachers for high performance. In March 2004, the Denver Classroom Teachers Association approved a plan that would replace the current lockstep salary structure with a new salary schedule that rewards teachers who advance their teaching knowledge and skills in the subjects they teach, take on additional professional responsibilities, take on the toughest school assignments, and produce results. Other districts and states should consider advancing similar or even stronger pay-for-performance salary systems.

- Improve mentoring programs for new teachers. As with any employee given a challenging job in the business world, new teachers need to be given the proper tools to succeed. High-quality mentoring from master teachers is one such tool. In a recently published study for the Education

A Matter of Degrees (Figure 2)

Nearly half of the math teachers in high-poverty schools do not hold a major or minor in a math-related field.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, 2001–02 school year

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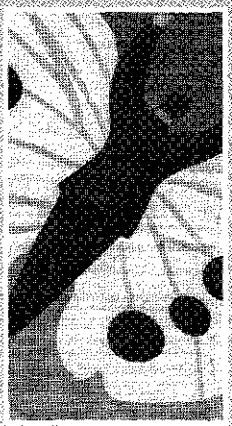
Commission of the States, University of Pennsylvania scholar Richard Ingersoll reviewed the research literature and found that mentoring programs have shown a positive impact on teachers and their retention.

Mentoring programs are also cost-effective, which should make them even more appealing to states struggling with fiscal problems. According to the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices, new teachers who participated in a structured mentoring program in California had a 9 percent attrition rate over five years, compared with 37 percent attrition among those who did not participate. Since the cost of replacing a teacher is estimated at 30 percent of salary and benefits, a high-quality mentoring program offers a far less expensive alternative.

That is why a mentoring program targeted at hard-to-staff schools should be an integral part of any state policymaking agenda. In Virginia we are implementing a mentoring program with a record of success. The program will be based on the "Great Beginnings" model that has proven effective in Fairfax County, Virginia, and the Educational Testing Service's "Pathwise" professional development program, which was piloted in Newport News, Virginia. Our Teacher Retention initiative will fund mentoring programs for new teachers in hard-to-staff schools during their first year in the classroom to: 1) encourage them to remain teachers and to stay in their current schools; and 2) prepare them to cope with the stumbling blocks they will likely face. The mentoring will be led by other, more experienced teachers in the school. Through annual reporting, participating districts will be required to show that their mentoring programs for new teachers have proved successful in increasing teacher retention.

✦ Tap proven leaders to turn around troubled schools. There is no substitute for effective leadership in establishing a positive environment for employees. Policymakers therefore need to take a much closer look at how to support and reward those principals and superintendents who help turn around hard-to-staff schools. In the business world, experts called "turnaround specialists" are now frequently used. These individuals are paid to turn struggling companies into positive performers.



More work is needed to create a cadre of leaders who can enter hard-to-staff schools and bring about the necessary changes.

The business world knows what kinds of leadership skills it takes to become such an expert. We have examples of turnaround specialists in the education world, too. But more work is needed to create a cadre of leaders who can enter hard-to-staff schools and bring about the necessary changes. We need to identify people who have the skills and experience, give them added training, and send them into challenged schools. These turnaround principals should have a proven record of overcoming adversity in schools.

In Virginia, I have established a training program for up to ten school administrators in the first year and an additional ten the following year. The University Partnership for Leaders in Education, a collaboration of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration and the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, is selecting and training the first group. These individuals, who are being identified now, must be licensed or eligible for licensure as a school administrator in Virginia. They must have served in a leadership capacity in an educational, professional, or business environment for a minimum of five years and have demonstrated experience in providing successful leadership in a low-performing school or organization. The training will result in a "Turnaround Specialist" credential. Each specialist will serve as the principal of a low-performing school for a minimum of three years.

Training will focus on business and education strategies that have been effective in improving low-performing organizations. It will use proven business management strategies such as effective organizational management, finance and accounting practices, restructuring and renewal of troubled organizations, turnaround and crisis management, and lessons in business and education law. The University of Virginia's business and education schools will develop the curriculum and provide the training for these turnaround specialists.

These specialists will work under a contract with the local school system that defines their responsibilities, goals, and measures of success. They may also negotiate to have additional authority beyond that of a regular school principal. In addition to the benefit of the intensive training, specialists will be eligible for incentives

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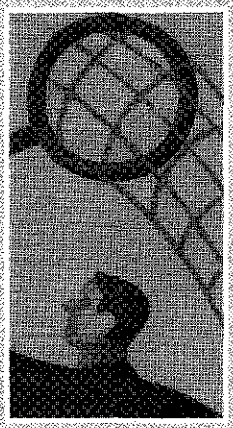
such as additional retirement benefits or deferred compensation.

✦ Make sure existing policies are equitable for hard-to-staff schools. State policies often have provisions that contribute to the problem of unequal teacher quality among schools. For example, many of the middle-school teachers who hold only elementary multiple-subject licenses do not have sufficient depth of knowledge in the content areas they teach. Currently, however, many states have adopted licensure policies that define the problem away by claiming that all of their current teachers, regardless of preparation, are highly qualified under federal guidelines if they have been teaching more than a year. To take better advantage of the new federal dollars that are available to help teachers become highly qualified, state policymakers should consider adopting more rigorous policies, such as requiring middle-school teachers to hold a degree or pass an exam in the subjects they teach.

State policymakers should also examine policies that allow school districts to exclude teacher salaries from the calculations they must make to show that they provide an "equal" education to students at high- and low-poverty schools. In fact, many of these districts even "bill" their high-poverty schools for the average teacher salary instead of the actual (and usually much lower) salaries they are paying to their often brand-new, less-qualified teachers. This has the effect of draining substantial resources from the very schools that need the most and sending them instead to the schools that typically need the least.

✦ Engage parents and community leaders. Perhaps the best way to make hard-to-staff schools more attractive to teachers is to encourage stronger support from and connections to the surrounding community. This can provide teachers with the feeling that they are not alone or embattled in the work that they do.

In Virginia, I established a Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) initiative, now in its second year. The PASS program has been deployed in 34 schools that have failed to meet Virginia's rigid standards. Schools participating in the initiative agree to accept the assistance of teams of educators from demographically similar schools that have high levels of achievement in reading and mathematics.



Policymakers should consider requiring middle-school teachers to hold a degree or pass an exam in the subjects they teach.

In addition, PASS schools are paired with business and community-based partners that provide a variety of tutoring and other volunteer services and support. To date, close to 200 business and community partners have signed on to participate. For instance, IBM recently became a lead partner and will donate computers, printers, software, and employee and retiree volunteers to 11 underperforming schools. The involvement of prominent community players such as IBM, Verizon, and others sends a clear message to teachers, students, and parents that their schools matter and that the community at large cares how they perform.

The impact of this message can be impressive. Achievement in English has increased in 81 percent of the PASS schools designated as "high priority"; math achievement has improved in 91 percent of those schools. One of our middle schools went from being "accredited with warning" in math for two consecutive years to earning Virginia's second-highest accreditation rating and achieving a 100 percent math passage rate.

There are, of course, strategies beyond those outlined here that states should consider in trying to help hard-to-staff schools attract and retain effective teachers. For instance, improving the care and education of children before they start school is of critical importance. Children in disadvantaged schools must be as healthy and ready to learn as those in more affluent communities. And we need innovative strategies to encourage teacher-preparation programs to focus more energy on training teachers specifically for work in at-risk schools.

In the end, policymakers need to keep in mind the simple truth that, just like other professionals, teachers want to succeed at the job they set out to do. And, as in other professions, the best and brightest will often gravitate to where they are respected, appreciated, and empowered to do their jobs effectively.

Mark R. Warner (D) is governor of Virginia and chairman of the Education Commission of the States.

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How Vouchers Came to D.C.

BY SPENCER S. HSU

The inside story of the Bush administration's successful effort to bring school choice to the nation's capital

"We walk away from these kids in every regard. We never fix these schools," said a disgusted Rep. Richard K. Armey (R-Texas). The date was May 23, 2001, and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives had rejected a proposal to fund a pilot school voucher program that would have provided a token voucher of $1,500 to students in five schools nationwide. "Where is the heart?" Armey, then the House majority leader, asked his own members.

Less than three years later, President George W. Bush delivered a far different message to voucher supporters—a declaration of victory. In January 2004, Bush signed legislation providing grants worth as much as $7,500 each to children from dozens of public schools in the District of Columbia for their use at private or religious schools in a five-year experiment. The recipients of the first federal "opportunity scholarships," as advocates named them, were announced in June.

After the vote, in a speech at the Heritage Foundation, a Washington-based conservative think tank, Secretary of Education Roderick R. Paige predicted that Washington's example would trigger campaigns in state legislatures across the country. "We have turned a corner," the secretary said. "This is just the beginning. We can't just sit and wait five years to see what happens here."

The D.C. program is a landmark, representing the first federally funded school voucher program. Moreover, by design the D.C. vouchers are more generous than those approved in Milwaukee, Cleveland, Florida, and Colorado, although they are generally limited to fewer children (see Table 1). How school voucher advocates engineered the breakthrough is the story

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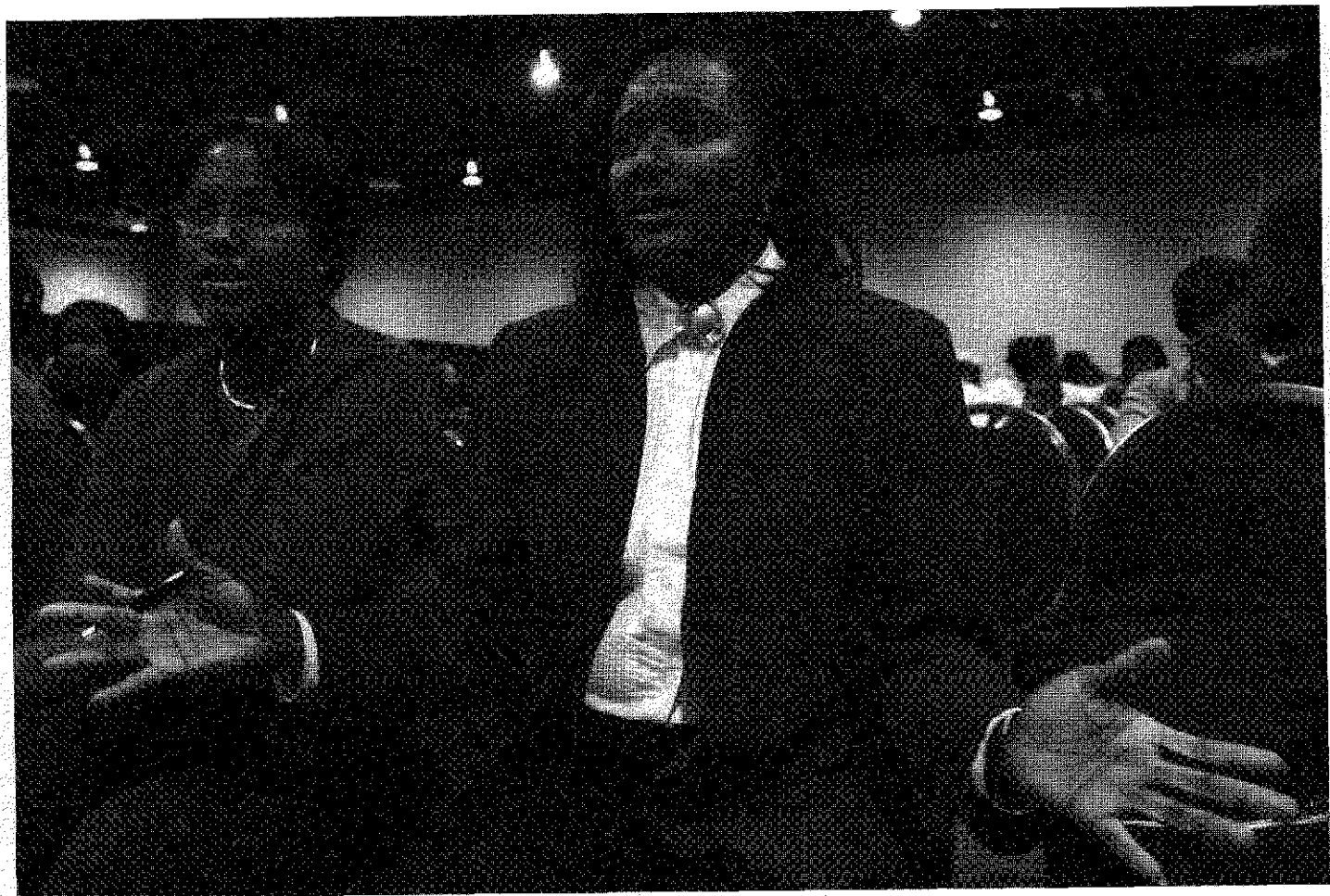

PHOTOGRAPH BY STAFF/WASHINGTON POST

Washington parents interested in school vouchers attend an orientation meeting at the Washington, D.C., convention center.

of a complex alignment of interests among conservative education activists, the Republicans who control Washington, and the local leaders of a majority African-American city. The legislation's passage, the culmination of a nine-year fight in Congress, attested to the school choice movement's persistence, deep pockets, and ability to capitalize on Washington residents' frustration with their struggling public schools.

To opponents, the creation of a federal program that pays for children to attend private schools can only foster the spread of vouchers. But Tanya Clay, legislative director of People for the American Way, a liberal advocacy group, said it is not clear if state legislatures will follow suit or if other black urban politicians will join them. The Washington fight was unique in many regards, not least in that the legislators who approved the voucher program are unaccountable to the voters whose lives it will affect, since the District of Columbia has no vote in Congress.

The latter is a chief bone of contention among some critics. In the words of Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), Washington's elected, nonvoting delegate to the House of Representatives, "[Republicans] used our denial of representation in the Senate, where vouchers would have been disposed of as a matter of senatorial courtesy, to force vouchers on the city."

A Ripe Target

The D.C. School Choice Incentive Act of 2003 provides $65 million (plus $5 million for administrative costs) over five years to send as many as 1,700 low-income D.C. students to private and parochial schools starting in the fall of 2004. The grants are limited to those households earning up to 185 percent of the poverty level, about $34,873 for a family of four in 2004. Scholarships are aimed at students from low-performing D.C. public schools.

The victory came at a price. To win the support of local officials, the Bush administration and Congress had to pledge $2 in additional aid to the District's regular and charter public school systems for every $1 in new tuition grants for private schooling. The concessions confounded some voucher purists, who say the deal undermined the competitive incentive for public schools to improve.

Voucher advocates who supported the deal calculated that, whatever the concessions, the movement would benefit in the long term from a pilot program. The outcome provided advocates with not only a high-profile laboratory for the idea, but also fresh evidence that

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a political strategy aimed at fusing support from African-American urban leaders to a coalition of Republican groups can work under certain circumstances. As one example, participants cited the cultivation of D.C. mayor Anthony A. Williams, whose backing proved decisive. "We had never had a locally elected black official, a Democrat from a city like D.C., asking for something like this before," said Nina Shokraii Rees, director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, which is implementing the program. "That's the single strongest factor that got people's attention."

Rees, a veteran of the school choice movement, said Washington was a ripe target. Movement strategists consider five factors when selecting battlegrounds, she said, and the District met each condition: a legislative and an executive branch controlled by supporters, local political champions for education or urban renewal, local business support, a weakened teacher union, and grassroots backing.

Advocates enjoyed important institutional advantages in swaying D.C.'s local government. Even though residents of the nation's capital elect their own local leaders to oversee most city and state functions, the District has no vote in Congress, and final oversight remains the province of the president and Congress. Consequently, Republicans have made regular attempts to enact a voucher program for the District—despite fierce opposition from local politicians—ever since they took control of Congress in 1994. Congress narrowly approved one such bill in 1998, knowing that President Clinton would veto it. George W. Bush's election in 2000 removed that obstacle, and the transition to unified Republican control of the federal government led some District officials to calculate that voucher legislation for the city would eventually come to pass.

One other factor unique to local Washington politics would shape events: the most powerful force opposing vouchers in D.C. politics, the local teachers union, had fallen into disarray. Responding to teachers' complaints of unusually high deductions for union dues from their paychecks in the summer of 2002, the American Federation of Teachers launched a financial audit and found at least $4.6 million missing from the treasury of its local affiliate, the Washington Teachers Union. Over the next two years, a federal investigation revealed that top union leaders had siphoned away dues to fund their lavish lifestyles. The episode neutralized the union's clout just as its political influence would be tested most.

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The Mayor Signs On

It was in this unsettled environment in 2002 that Williams—together with a small group of other black Washington Democrats previously opposed to school vouchers—began back-channel talks with supporters close to White House and congressional leaders. In Williams, the school choice movement discovered an unexpected ally, motivated by a combination of personal biography, pragmatism, and political survival.

The adopted son of two postal workers, Williams, 52, graduated from Loyola, a Catholic, mostly white high school in Los Angeles, before serving in the Air Force and earning undergraduate, law, and public policy degrees from Yale and Harvard. Running for mayor in 1998, Williams called the parents who scraped together the money to send him to private school the greatest influence in his life. Nonetheless, as a candidate and officeholder, Williams called vouchers a divisive distraction benefiting the few at the expense of the many in public schools. "While the District's public school system . . . must be reformed, school vouchers are not the answer," he said at the time. "Rather than using taxpayer dollars to provide vouchers to a few, we must focus our resources and efforts on concrete reforms that make our public schools better for all of the District's schoolchildren."

By 2002, a reelection year, the mayor had found the problems of the D.C. public school system intractable and a growing political weight. Williams routinely promised quality schools as the linchpin of a vision to lure middle-class residents back to the city. His failure to deliver on this promise had worried his base of business supporters and made him appear feckless to skeptics.

For its part, the school system has churned through a new superintendent every two years on average since 1994. Over that period, the performance of D.C.'s students has remained distressingly low compared with students in other large urban school districts. The system reports needing $2 billion more to maintain crumbling schools, whose dilapidation delayed the start of the school year twice in the 1990s. Meanwhile, per-pupil spending reached $13,355 in 2002–03, compared with a national average of less than $10,000 a year, according to U.S. Department of Education statistics, although, unlike other school systems, the District figures include the equivalent of both state-level and local education spending.

The list of familiar big-city woes continues. Violence remains a menace, with school-related shootings claiming three

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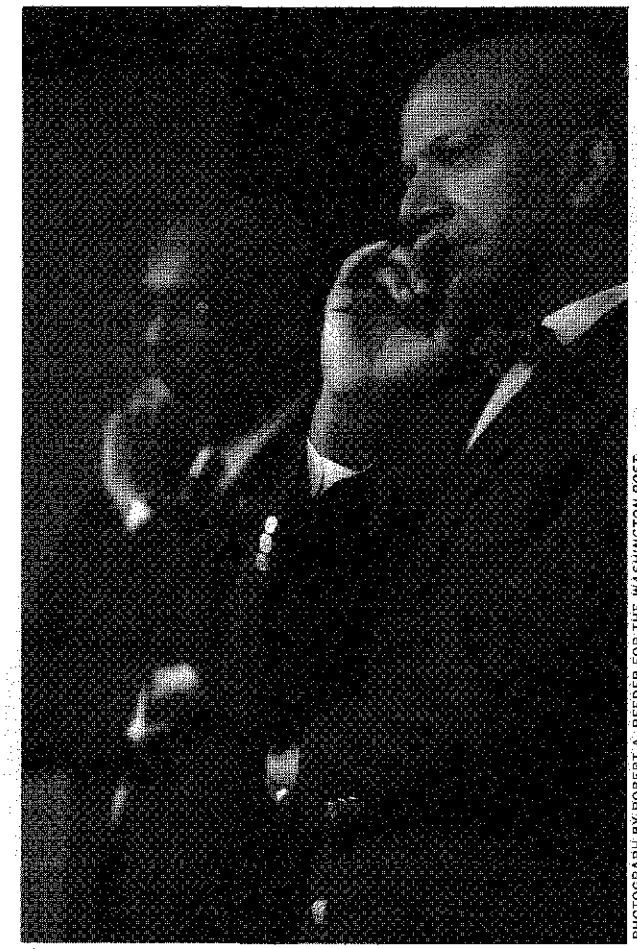
teenagers in a three-month span last year. A new D.C. school board study concluded that the system was beset by a lack of accountability, an "incoherent" curriculum, haphazard instruction, and "abysmal results." Disparities between the test scores of black and white students are among the nation's widest, in a student body that is 84 percent African-American. Finally, the system's long-term flaws are evident in the city's functional illiteracy rate of 40 percent among adults. If the D.C. public school system were in any other city, some observers have concluded, it would long ago have been taken over by a state legislature. Congress, however, is ill equipped and disinclined to undertake that local function.

So when a council of chief executives of the area's largest corporations identified school reform as their top priority, Williams listened. In 2002 he gave a private pledge to business leaders organized by Terence C. Golden, a former Reagan administration Treasury official and chief executive of Host Marriott, to support vouchers as part of a broader initiative to help charter and regular public schools.

One key figure was Joseph E. Robert Jr., a local real-estate mogul who has spent millions promoting school vouchers and supporting local education and youth groups. Robert recalled the CEO dinner in the fall of 2002 at which Williams abandoned his anti-voucher stance. "The question came up, what big idea should we be working on in his administration the next year with regard to education," said Robert. With the mayor coming out in support of vouchers, Robert pushed ahead with a full-scale campaign. "We called it 'Capital Gains,'" he said, and embarked on a series of meetings with business and community leaders "in every office, in restaurants and homes . . . to get vouchers right here in Washington."

Robert supported grassroots organizations such as D.C. Parents for School Choice, a group of about 50 activists and hundreds of supporters that had become the public face of the District of Columbia voucher movement. In addition, Robert capitalized on his ties to such national figures in the voucher movement as Wal-Mart heir John Walton and his American Education Reform Council; Howard Fuller, the former Milwaukee superintendent who now heads the Black Alliance for Educational Options; and the Institute for Justice, the voucher movement's legal brain trust. Also involved were J. Patrick Rooney, chairman of the Golden Rule Insurance Company; the family of Richard M. and Betsy DeVos Jr., founders of Amway Corporation; and former Circuit City chief Richard Sharp. "These are people who have connections on the Hill, who have friends. Without them I think it is fair to say this wouldn't have gone anywhere," said Rep. Thomas M. Davis III (R-Virginia), an eventual sponsor of the D.C. voucher legislation.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT A. REEDER FOR THE *WASHINGTON POST*

Mayor Williams and Secretary Paige announce the administrator of the D.C. School Choice Incentive Program.

In explaining his change of heart, Williams said after years of effort he had learned that "trying to do the same thing just doesn't work." He also cited public opinion research showing that voters believe government spends enough on education but does not spend it well enough. At the same time, the mayor said he got the best deal he could for the city because he secured additional dollars for public schools. He explained, "Here's the way to think about it. Let's say you have 2,000 students choose a voucher program. You hold harmless the public schools because another $13 million can go into enrichment of one sort or another. That's real money over a period of five years if we're serious in pushing it through to the public school system, dealing with issues of juvenile crime, the lack of structure, the whole panoply of social issues. Reorganizing education is a first step. I think it's an important precedent that other places in the country might follow, and it's important for us."

The Tradeoff

The Washington talks did not take place in a vacuum. In February 2003, President Bush leaked word through aides that his 2004 budget would include $75 million for school choice experiments in a handful of cities, including the District of Columbia. White House officials had been kept apprised of developments in the District through Republican intermediaries active in city affairs such as former GOP cabinet members William F. Bennett and William T. Coleman.

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Publicly Funded Voucher Programs in the United States (Table 1)

	D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program	Colorado Opportunity Contract Pilot Program*	Florida A+ Plan Opportunity Scholarship Program	Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program	Milwaukee Parental Choice Program
Year Vouchers Inaugurated	2004	2004	1999	1996	1990
Voucher Amount	Up to $7,500, based on financial need	Lesser of private schools' per-pupil cost or 37.5% of district per-pupil operating revenue for kindergartners 75% for elementary and junior-high students 85% for high-school students, approximately $4,500	State's share of eligible student's educational expenses, about $4,000 during 2003 school year	Up to $2,700 for K-8 and $2,430 for grades 9 and 10 during 2004-05 school year Capped at 90% of tuition and based on financial need	For 2003-04 school year, the lesser of $5,882 or private school's per-pupil costs
Eligible Students	Students eligible for federal lunch program	Students must be eligible for federal lunch program and come from a district designated by the state as "poor performing" or that voluntarily participates	Students in schools that received an F on the state report card twice within a four-year period	Students in the Cleveland school district	Students with household incomes at or below 175% of the poverty line
Potential Number of Students	Funding available for as many as 1,700 students Program is authorized for 5 years	Participation capped at 1% of a district's enrollment in program's first year, rising annually to a maximum of 6% In the first year, 11 districts were set to participate and a maximum of 3,400 vouchers were to be available. By the program's fourth year, 21,000 students could be using vouchers	Not capped During the 2003-04 school year, 1,611 students used an opportunity scholarship. Of those students, 640 attended a private school.	Budgetary cap 5,281 students received tuition scholarships during the 2003-04 school year	Capped at 15% (about 15,000) of Milwaukee public school students 13,258 participants during the 2003-04 school year

* Program invalidated by Colorado Supreme Court pending legislative revisions

NOTE: All programs allow vouchers to be used at religious schools. Florida also has the McKay Scholarship for Disabled Students, which are available to students with special needs whose parents are dissatisfied with their academic progress. During the 2003 school year, 13,739 Florida students used a McKay Scholarship to attend a private school.

SOURCE: Washington, D.C., Colorado, Florida, Cleveland, and Milwaukee voucher programs

"The secretary had heard from several people that the mayor in private conversations had expressed interest in school choice," said one official close to Paige.

Within days of the Bush leak on vouchers, Secretary Paige opened direct talks with city officials, meeting with Mayor Williams and with D.C. school board president Peggy Cooper Cafritz and D.C. council member Kevin P. Chavous.

Dead set against vouchers when he ran against Williams for mayor in 1998, Chavous had come around to supporting charter schools, reflecting Democratic orthodoxy. At a February 2003 dinner with the chief executives at a downtown hotel, he announced his further conversion to vouchers. "More money alone wouldn't do it," Chavous recalled. "Public schools won't reform themselves internally. They will only respond to external pressures and a more educated electorate."

Where Cafritz in early February had declared the school board "solidly against vouchers" and proponents "people whose goals are different than the people who live here," she shifted course in a newspaper opinion article the following month. She began by conceding, "Some version of this legislation is certain to pass. . . . We must accept the federally proposed voucher or scholarship program." In exchange, she sought money for the public system, limitation of vouchers' use to private schools in the city, and discussion of a "Marshall Plan" for public schools, charter schools, and other nonprofit education facilities in the city.

With the mayor, the school board president, and a key city council member on the team, voucher supporters had cracked the solid wall of local opposition that had stalled past campaigns.

Congress Debates

Throughout the summer of 2003, voucher opponents were mobilizing. As a September showdown neared, their coalition included the major teacher unions and public education associations, People for the American Way, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and several Jewish organizations, among others. Opponents hammered at the theme that vouchers would divert taxpayers' money from public schools, weaken public education, and leave tens of thousands of children behind. Teacher union officials began calling in chits with

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swing members; local school board members flooded Capitol Hill switchboards; and party-whipping organizations went to battle stations.

The White House turned up its pressure. For the first time in recent memory, a president sent emissaries to meet with appropriations committee members to press them to include funding for a single initiative. President Bush's senior congressional lobbyist, David W. Hobbs, called the voucher program as high a priority for the administration as passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001. He portrayed the vote as a test of Republicans' loyalty to their president and said Bush himself lobbied lawmakers.

The floor debate was familiar. While opponents said that vouchers had no track record of improving student performance, supporters countered that no alternative could be worse than Washington's public schools, which in any case were in line to receive more federal aid. Critics also said that private schools receiving taxpayer aid would be less accountable to voters and would operate free of some antidiscrimination laws.

Meanwhile, advocates invoked the "hypocrisy" of voucher critics in Congress who were rich enough to send their own children to private schools but would deny that option to the city's poorer families. Finally, they said accountability would be ensured by the U.S. secretary of education and Mayor Williams and by rigorous research studies supported by the department. The result was one of the closest votes of the year. On September 9, 2003, the full House approved a District of Columbia voucher bill by a single vote, 209–208.

Meanwhile, the Senate was waging its own pitched fight. Both sides focused on the Senate Appropriations Committee and a handful of centrist members who held the balance of power. Under Senate rules, the committee's vote would be crucial to the bill's fate. If the measure reached the floor, the Republican majority would have the upper hand in parliamentary maneuvering to force final passage. However, in July, one of the committee's Republican senators, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, had made clear his opposition, citing concern that the voucher program would lead to religious discrimination and scuttling hopes for a quick committee vote.

In D.C. mayor Anthony Williams, the school choice movement discovered an unexpected ally, motivated by a combination of personal biography and political survival.

Feinstein's Conversion

From the logjam emerged Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein of California. Like Williams, Feinstein had served as a big-city mayor, in her case nine years in San Francisco. Like him she had spent her career, 30 years in elective office, opposing vouchers. But like Williams, she credited her family's decision to enroll her in a Catholic school, as one of a few Jewish students, with setting her on her life's course, from Stanford University into public life and to the U.S. Senate. In an abrupt break with California's powerful teacher unions, Feinstein reversed course and embraced the D.C. choice legislation on July 22.

"Local leaders should have the opportunity to experiment with programs that they believe are right for their area," Feinstein said. "If supporting the mayor's proposal will help us to better understand what works and what doesn't in terms of educating our youth, then I believe Williams should be allowed to undertake this experiment." She also made clear that she was supporting vouchers in a Washington test case, not for her home state. The Senate committee forwarded the District bill on to the floor with the help of Feinstein and ranking panel Democrat Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia.

Both sides launched a final blitz. D.C. Parents for School Choice ran television advertisements targeting key senators including Massachusetts Democrat Edward M. Kennedy, accusing him of fighting efforts to help black children and comparing him to segregationist Bull Connor, the police chief in Birmingham, Alabama, who used violent tactics to disperse civil-rights demonstrators in the 1960s. The ad said, "Senator Kennedy, your brothers fought for us. Why do you fight against us? Are the unions really more important than these children?" The Black Alliance for Educational Options bought a full-page ad in a New Orleans newspaper accusing Louisiana senator Mary Landrieu of turning her back on African-Americans and noting that her two children attend private school in Washington.

Voucher opponents also fought fiercely. The National Education Association called on the four Senate Democrats then on the presidential campaign trail to be ready to return to Washington to vote against the measure. State NEA affiliates arranged meetings with wavering members, such as Sen. Tom Carper (D-Delaware), from whom the union had withheld its endorsement after past disputes. Together with wavering Republicans in states where vouchers are unpopular, opposing Democrats held firm.

In the end, a de facto filibuster by opponents kept the measure from passing for four months. But if the GOP leadership could not muster the 60 votes

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needed to cut off debate and pass the bill, opponents could not muster the 51 votes to kill it outright. Using prerogatives of the majority, Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Senate Appropriations Committee chairman Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) ultimately rolled the District

"Local leaders should have the opportunity to experiment with programs that they believe are right for their area," Senator Feinstein said.

measure into a catchall federal spending bill and defied Democrats to risk a government shutdown. Opponents took comfort in the fact that the Senate never voted directly on the voucher provision. Nevertheless, the measure was passed on January 22 and quietly signed by Bush the next day.

The Fallout

Meanwhile, in Washington, the fallout from the program lingers. According to a November 2003 poll for two Washington radio and television stations, Williams' approval ratings among D.C. Democratic voters plummeted to 45 percent, compared with 64 percent among residents at large in 2002. Mayoral aides blamed the drop in part on the voucher fight and his bucking Democratic Party orthodoxy. The Washington Teachers Union has withdrawn its support, and Williams faced a nascent recall effort early this year.

The mayor appears unfazed, although his broader education reform initiatives have been rejected by the city council. "This is not a partisan issue. It's not Republican, it's not Democratic, it's for the kids," Williams reflected about his voucher stance. "What percentage of kids in public schools in D.C. are African-American? I've got to believe, it's not just suburban parents who are upset about education."

Those who question Williams's decision to support vouchers argue that the promises of greater aid to public education are nothing more than a short-term sweetener to win passage of programs that may erode support for public schools, a penny ante in a broader contest over billions of dollars in government education spending. The mayor's change of heart notwithstanding, they say the outreach to African-American urban leaders is politically motivated and will fall short, just as the Republican Party has failed to win over black voters with its choice of issues and leaders for 30 years.

To school choice movement veteran Nina Rees, the decision to provide more funding for public schools as well as vouchers for private tuition was a virtue. It shifted the debate to focus on improving education for young people, said Rees, not the mechanism by which they are taught.

"Public education isn't so much who provides it, as much as who pays for it," said Jim Blew of the American Education Reform Council. "The goal is not to decide where students get educated—it's whether they get educated."

As for the voucher program, organizers announced in June that about 1,200 low-income children (out of 2,600 applicants, 1,700 of whom were eligible) will receive vouchers this fall. The Washington Scholarship Fund, a nonprofit supported by Robert that has raised private funds to help provide tuition scholarships for private school students, was selected by the Department of Education to administer the effort. While a lottery to select voucher recipients chose first from among students in 15 D.C. public schools that failed for two years to meet goals under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, about one in six D.C. children who will receive tuition grants are students who already attend private school. The Fund also announced that 50 private schools have agreed to participate.

Private schools are having to adjust to the new world of federal funding. Under the law, they can apply their own admissions criteria and placement tests to voucher students. They can also raise their tuition as long as they demonstrate in writing that any annual increase of more than 10 percent is warranted. Schools must submit tuition and fee schedules, comparative data to help parents select sites for their children, and documentation showing lawful operation such as certificates of occupancy, independent financial audits, and compliance with D.C. health, safety, and fire codes.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, whose private school system is expected to provide the bulk of the seats for new voucher students and which was involved in passing and developing the program, is seeking additional money, noting that their tuition rates on average cover only about 50 percent of the system's costs to educate each child. Voucher administrators are ironing out such key details as what fees to cover under the program, while making sure that voucher students are charged no more than other pupils.

For most Washington schoolchildren headed back to class this fall, any change in their lives as a result of the 2003 voucher battle in Congress will remain remote. When fully phased in, the $14 million-a-year voucher program is expected to serve about 2,000 students, a small portion of the roughly 80,000 children enrolled in the city's regular and charter public schools.

Spencer S. Hsu is a reporter for the Washington Post.

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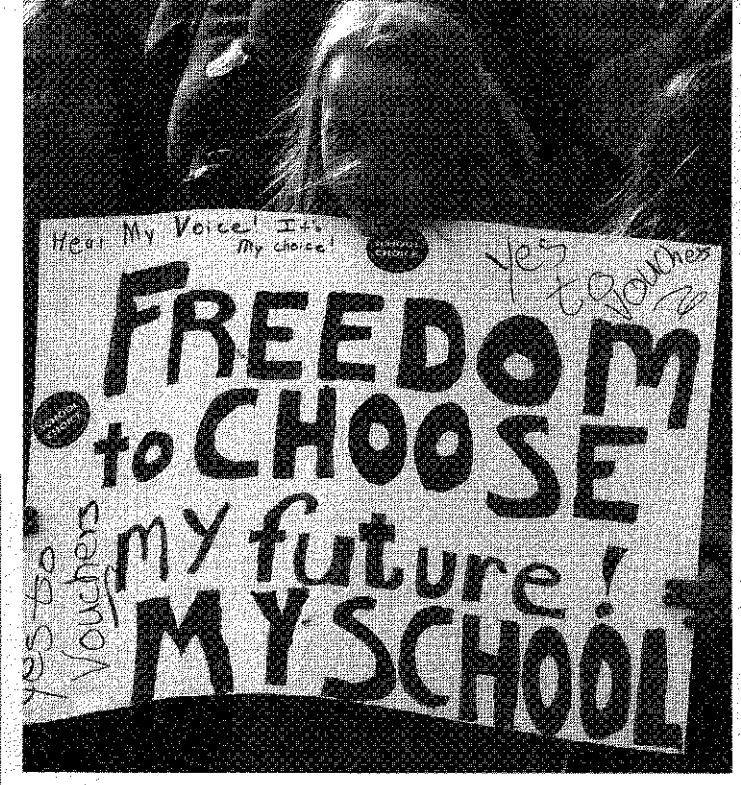

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP WIDEWORLD

Will Vouchers Arrive in Colorado?

BY LANCE D. FUSARELLI

The legislature enacts a new voucher law – and the courts say, not so fast

In April 2003 the Colorado legislature created a school voucher program that has the potential to become one of the largest in the nation. Initially the number of children eligible for vouchers will be limited to 1 percent of the student population in each of the 11 low-performing school districts targeted by the legislation, or about 3,400 students overall. But by the program's fourth year in operation, when the cap permanently rises to 6 percent, up to 21,000 students statewide could be using state-funded vouchers to attend private and religious schools.

Coming on the heels of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Zelman* decision, approving the public funding of religious schooling, Colorado's program was the first enacted without the cloud of a potential First Amendment challenge. Yet that did not inoculate it against a legal attack. Opponents filed suit in May 2003, alleging that the program ran afoul of the Colorado state

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constitution's guarantee that local school boards "shall have control of instruction in the public schools of their respective districts."

In December a state trial court judge sided with the plaintiffs, ruling that the program violated the state constitution's local control provision by giving Colorado school boards no "input whatsoever into the instruction to be offered by the private schools" that accepted voucher students. In June 2004, the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the lower court's ruling, with the majority holding that the "statewide system of school finance is designed to preserve local control over locally raised tax revenues." The voucher program is on hold unless the state legislature can create a more acceptable funding and regulatory structure for it.

Nevertheless, voucher legislation is under discussion in many states, and Colorado provides an opportunity to examine what it takes to establish a program. Like many controversial yet successful policy initiatives, voucher legislation was enacted in Colorado due to a kind of "perfect storm"—a confluence of unlikely events and trends that came together simultaneously. In Colorado, these factors included a state that has become increasingly Republican and thus receptive to conservative ideology; Republican majorities in the state legislature and a Republican in the statehouse; a large, disenfranchised minority community of Latinos with children trapped in low-performing schools; the support of several key Latino business groups, advocacy groups, and elected officials; and a maverick Democrat willing to support a plan he believed would benefit his constituents.

Receptive to Choice

Colorado has long been in the forefront of the school choice movement. In 1993 it became one of the first states to pass legislation enabling the creation of charter schools. Likewise, Colorado offers intra- and interdistrict public school choice statewide. Homeschooling is also an increasingly popular option in Colorado. The widespread adoption of public school choice coupled with the existence of vibrant alternatives to traditional public schools enabled lawmakers to lay the groundwork for vouchers.

Bill Owens, the first Republican governor elected in Colorado in 30 years, made it clear that he intended to sign a voucher bill into law.

However, voucher-type proposals have not been successful in statewide ballot initiatives. In 1992 an initiative that would have provided a voucher to any student, regardless of family income, for use in private schools was defeated by a two-to-one margin. Six years later, a proposal to give tax credits to families who pay tuition for private schooling was defeated by 60 percent of voters.

But with Republicans controlling the state legislature, Bill Owens, the first Republican governor elected in Colorado in 30 years, made it clear that he intended to sign a voucher bill into law during the 2003 legislative session. Throughout his political career, Owens had strongly supported expanded public and private school choice in Colorado, going so far as to publicly endorse pro-voucher candidates for school boards. He was also one of the primary architects of Colorado's strong charter school legislation. Moreover, in the spring of 2004, he signed a bill that will provide state higher education aid directly to students in the form of a voucher for use at the schools of their choice. In the past, aid flowed to the institutions.

Various voucher bills were floated during the 2003 legislative session. Among them, two would have provided tax credits to organizations that made donations to K–12 scholarship programs. These proposals were similar to the programs in Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Florida, but they garnered little support due to hefty price tags and tight state budgets. Senator Ed Jones offered a proposal to create an experimental scholarship program in three school districts—and presented the state senate appropriations committee with a $78,300 check from a special-interest group to fund the plan. But Jones's bill failed to pass the senate.

Support ultimately coalesced around the bill introduced by Republican Nancy Spence, chair of the house education committee. Like the successful legislation in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C., the Spence bill was sold as a program to help low-income students escape failing schools. It restricted vouchers to students performing at an "unsatisfactory" level in 11 school districts that the state has rated "low" or "unsatisfactory." Parents could enroll their child at a private or religious school with a voucher worth up to 85 percent of the district's per-pupil funding (as much as $4,500). The balance of the per-pupil funding was to remain with the school district. Other districts could opt into the program if the local school board approved—an unlikely outcome.

As in Washington, D.C., where the federal government agreed to send $2 in aid to the public schools for every $1 it spent on the voucher program, Spence found it politically necessary to continue sending 15 to 25 percent of the per-pupil funding to the school districts for each student who chose to use a voucher. Addressing the complaint that a district's

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fixed costs do not decline in direct proportion to the number of students who exit the system, Spence stated, "I recognize that [public schools] have certain fixed costs," although she noted that "essentially the districts are making a profit on students they don't educate."

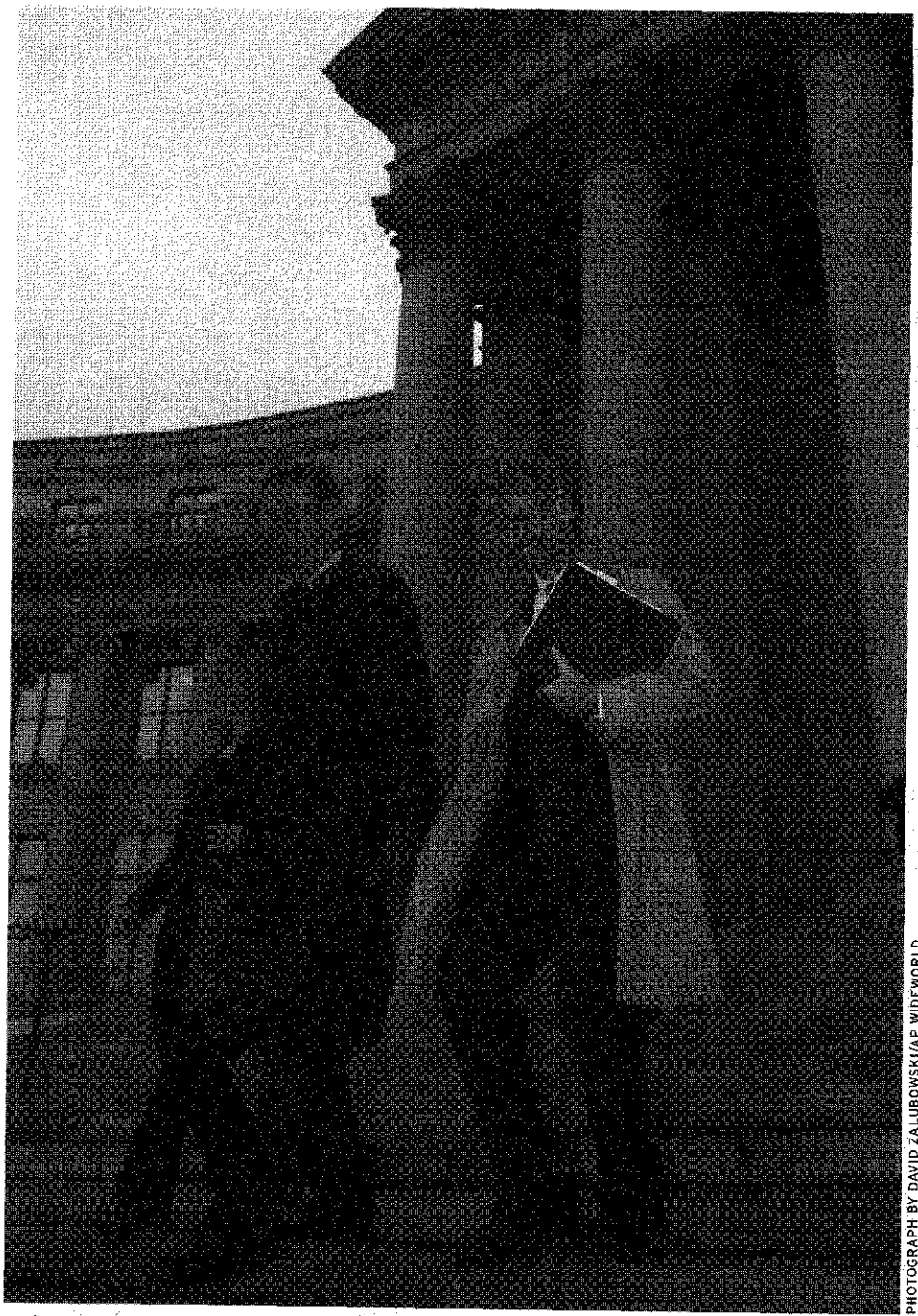
Opponents alleged that the voucher law could cost the public schools more than $90 million a year by 2007, although a fiscal impact analysis by the Colorado Legislative Council estimated that no additional state appropriations would be required to implement the bill. A study conducted by Bruce Cairns, a member of the state senate education committee, found that the average cost of private education in Colorado was $2,625—much less than in public schools, leading Cairns to conclude, "School choice is cheaper and more efficient."

Powerful Conversions

As debate raged on in the legislature, several significant developments occurred that gave the Spence bill added momentum. For one thing, every major newspaper in the state, including the *Denver Post*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Greeley Tribune*, endorsed the bill, as did the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Denver.

More important in a state where Latinos represent the largest group of minority public school children, outnumbering African-Americans nearly four to one, leading Latino politicians, activist groups, and business organizations came out in favor of vouchers. Even though the state legislature and governorship were under unified Republican control, the Republicans' majorities were slim enough that the active support of Latino groups traditionally affiliated with the Democratic Party made a difference.

One prominent supporter of the Spence bill was the Coalition for Latino Children in Education, a grassroots organization dedicated to providing choice in education for low-income Latino families. Luis Villarreal, head of the coalition,



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP WIDEWORLD

Colorado deputy attorney general Renny Fagan (right) leaves courthouse after taking part in arguments about the school voucher program.

asserted, "The years are gone when poor parents had no power to help themselves or their children. When [voucher opponents] talk about public funds, let's talk about the 30,000 students with Spanish surnames in [Denver Public Schools] who won't see graduation day." Jorge Amaya, president of the Northern Colorado Latino Chamber of Commerce, which supported the bill along with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said, "Rich people can live anywhere they want to, take their kids to whatever school they want to because they can. Poor kids can't do that. They're stuck in their schools."

The high dropout rate among Latinos is one of the state's most pressing

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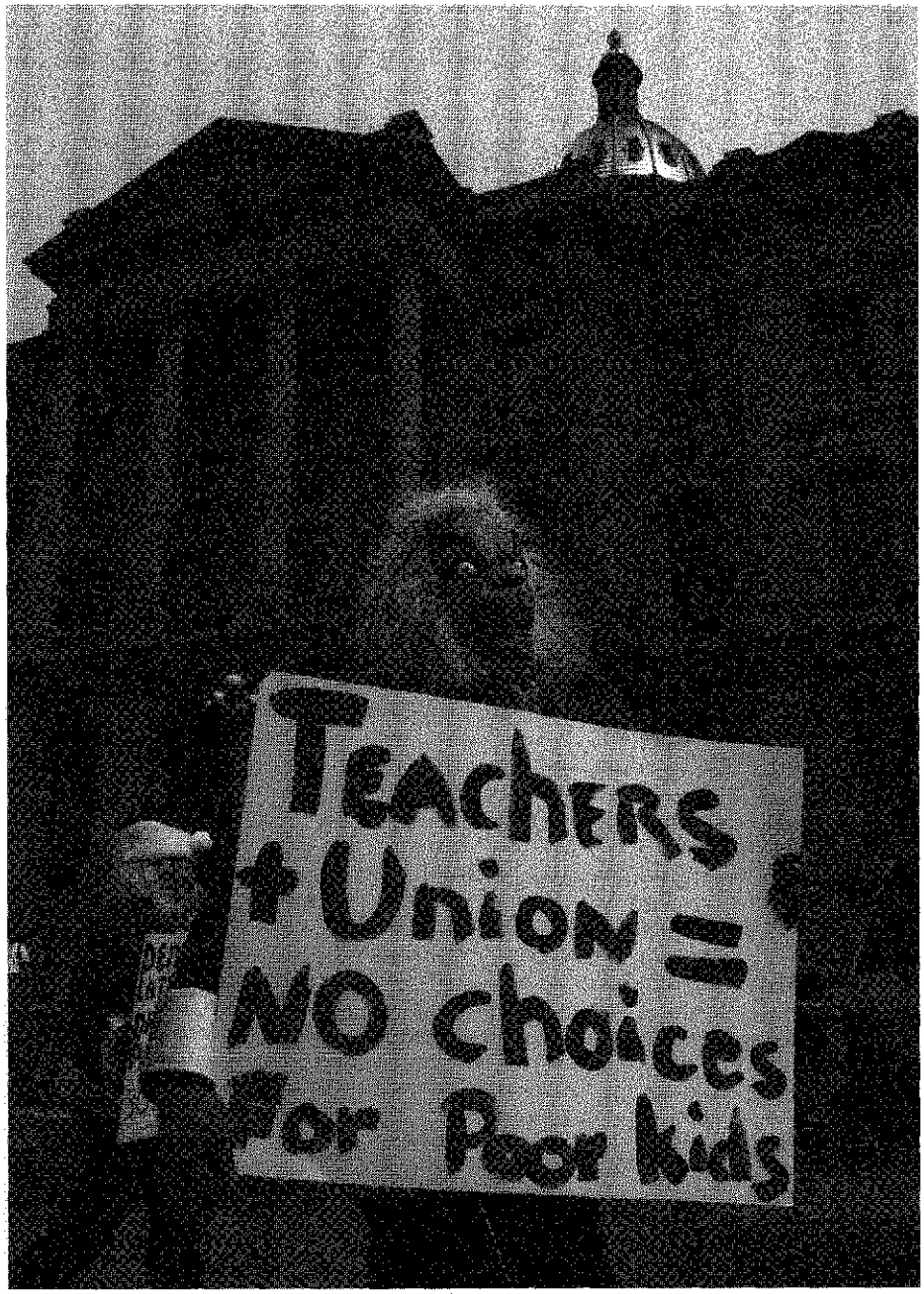

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK DEMPSEY/AP WIDE WORLD

Voucher demonstrators in Colorado wear Grinch masks to express their displeasure with the anti-choice position of the Colorado Education Association.

problems: the Colorado Children's Campaign estimates that nearly two-thirds of Latino high-school freshmen fail to graduate in four years. The Children's Campaign reversed its long-standing opposition to vouchers in part because of the dismal performance of children attending schools in low-income areas. Amendments to the voucher bill—requiring that private schools have nondiscriminatory admissions and hiring policies; that voucher recipients take the Colorado Student Assessment Program test; and that some funding remain with school districts to cover fixed costs—also helped to earn the Children's Campaign's support.

Perhaps the most politically powerful conversion was made by Attorney General Ken Salazar, the most visible Latino elected official in the state, who reversed his long-time opposition to vouchers. Several knowledgeable observers attributed this change of heart to Salazar's political deftness: they believe he will be a strong candidate for Ben Nighthorse Campbell's U.S. Senate seat in 2004. Statewide, a Ciruli Associates poll showed 57 percent of Hispanics supporting vouchers, while whites and African-Americans appeared evenly divided on the issue. A separate poll released by the Colorado Education Association, which worked with the Colorado Association of School Boards and other school-based interest groups to kill or amend the legislation, reported that 60 percent of voters opposed vouchers or tuition tax credits.

Despite their majority status, Republicans in the senate had a difficult time fending off Democratic attempts to stop or alter the legislation. Under intense pressure from the state teacher union, Senator Peter Groff, representing Denver, offered most of the 16 amendments to the Spence bill—nearly all of which were defeated.

Even so, many of the changes that were enacted strengthened the final version of the bill, according to Spence. These amendments included provisions requiring private and parochial schools accepting vouchers to comply with state and federal safety regulations; not to teach hatred of any person or group; to be fiscally solvent; and to conduct background checks for school employees. However, one amendment—which restricted eligibility to those students who score "unsatisfactory" as opposed to merely "partially proficient" on the Colorado state test—effectively cut the number of eligible students in half. Students in grades K–3, who don't take state tests, are still eligible if their neighborhood school has been rated "low" or "unsatisfactory" and has not improved or if the students meet at least three of the Colorado Preschool Program's at-risk factors.

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The final vote in the senate was largely along party lines, with one Republican opposed and one Democrat voting in favor of the bill. Vouchers would not have cleared the senate without the support of maverick Democratic senator Bob Hagedorn, who has long advocated expanded school choice. Hagedorn represents Aurora, the third largest city in the state and home to one of the 11 school districts targeted in the voucher legislation. Democratic leaders subsequently tried to remove Hagedorn from membership on a key senate health and welfare committee, but senate Republicans (along with three Democrats, including Hagedorn) blocked the move.

Lessons Learned

Several practical political lessons can be drawn from the Colorado case. First, voucher advocates should avoid statewide ballot initiatives and instead work through the state legislature. Campaigns against statewide referendums can always cite worst-case scenarios, making voters reluctant to ratify controversial or potentially divisive initiatives or to alter the status quo. In such statewide campaigns, it is easier for voucher opponents such as the teacher unions to influence the public as a whole than it is to influence the votes of individual legislators, especially in states with Republican majorities where legislators are less beholden to teacher unions and their allies in the public school system.

Second, in what is sometimes referred to as the "Brennan strategy," named for the architect of the Cleveland voucher program, voucher advocates need to structure their proposals as limited pilot programs targeted at low-income families with children in failing schools. This strategy attracts some urban Democrats who would otherwise oppose vouchers. Colorado real-estate developer Steve Schuck asserted, "If we learned anything from [Colorado's failed statewide voucher initiative], it's that rich white Republicans of goodwill sitting around trying to figure out what is best for somebody else doesn't work." In Schuck's words, voucher advocates must build an "army of black and brown mothers who will march on the capitol steps to demand a quality education for their kids."

Voucher advocates need to structure their proposals as limited programs targeted at low-income families with children in failing schools.

Third, although much is made of the growing bipartisan support for vouchers, vouchers remain an overwhelmingly Republican issue, particularly in state legislatures. Votes on vouchers consistently follow party lines, with a few urban Democrats breaking ranks to support vouchers and a few Republicans in opposition. Colorado Republicans held a solid nine-vote majority in the house, but only a one-vote majority in the senate. Only firm intraparty discipline and the support of a key Democratic senator, coupled with a supportive Republican governor, brought vouchers to Colorado. Voucher advocates benefited greatly from the influx of Republican voters into Colorado during the past decade—roughly two or three Republicans have migrated to the state for every Democratic voter—a demographic trend that has changed Colorado from having a slight Democratic plurality in 1993 to having a Republican majority in 2003, according to an analysis by the *Denver Post*. Many have come from Southern California and Texas.

Whether Colorado's new voucher law will affect education in the state depends on whether the state legislature can pass a voucher bill that meets constitutional muster. Representative Spence plans to introduce a new voucher bill in January 2005. However, the November 2004 elections, in which all the state house seats are up for grabs, may well determine the likelihood that a revised voucher law will pass. Furthermore, any new law will undoubtedly be challenged in court, making it improbable that any voucher plan will be implemented by fall 2005, if at all.

If vouchers eventually receive court approval, their impact will depend on how many parents choose to exercise choice and how the traditional public education system responds to the competition. If large numbers of parents use the vouchers and the public schools respond creatively and productively to the challenge, the ripple effects throughout the education system could be substantial. However, even if participation reaches a peak of 21,000 students in the program's fourth year, it will represent less than 3 percent of public school enrollment statewide. Thus, while the impact on the 11 targeted school districts could be significant, it is unlikely that Colorado's voucher law will produce wholesale changes in the state's public school system. More likely, over time, the measure will lay the groundwork for introducing more private-sector innovations, such as merit pay and the elimination of tenure and salary schedules, into public education in Colorado.

Lance D. Fusarelli is an associate professor of educational leadership and policy at North Carolina State University.

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School Inflation

BY CHRISTOPHER BERRY

"**How** much of our academic talent can we afford to waste? If the answer is 'none,' then . . . the elimination of the small high school through district reorganization and consolidation should have top priority."

—**James Conant**, president of Harvard University, 1959

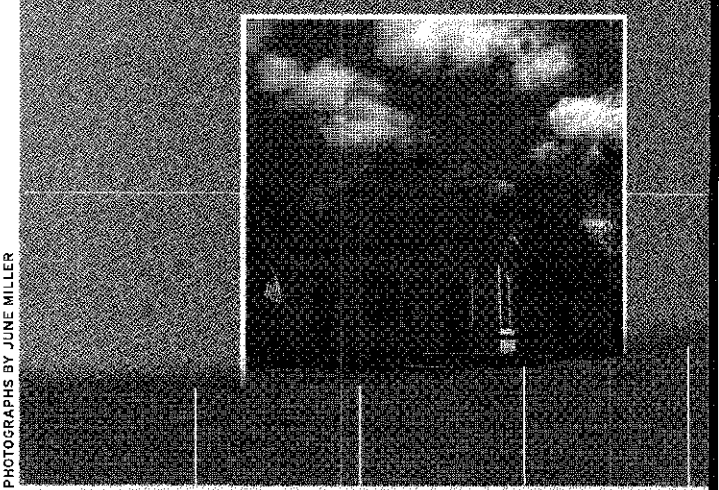
"**One** of the key issues that I believe affects safety and the whole educational enterprise is the size of our schools. This is an area where we have made terrible mistakes. . . . Too many schools are just too big."

—**James Hunt**, governor of North Carolina, 2001

How times change. Small schools, once derided as relics of the education system and obstacles to national progress, now lie at the heart of one of America's most popular reform strategies. After decades on the endangered species list, small schools have become the next big thing in education.

The idea behind small schools is simple: having fewer students in each school should create a more nurturing environment where all kids can receive the attention they need—and none fall through the cracks that may develop at a larger school. Among its followers, the small-schools movement includes some of the heaviest hitters in the education world, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Annenberg

Growth in the Size of the Average Public School from 1869 to 1999 (Figure 1)



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUNE MILLER

1869 1879 1889 1899 1909

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

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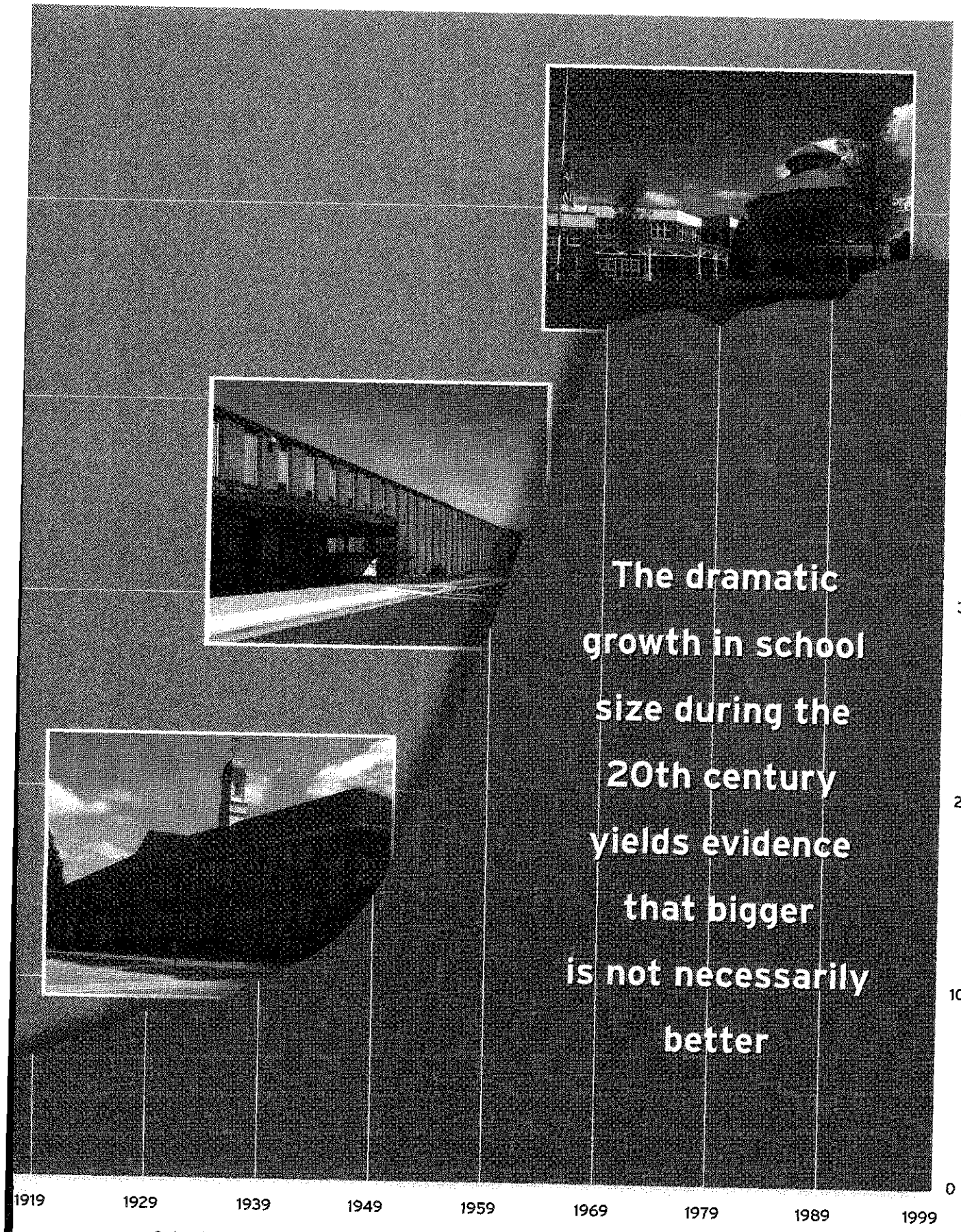

The dramatic growth in school size during the 20th century yields evidence that bigger is not necessarily better

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The desire to create larger schools frequently made it necessary to consolidate school districts as well.

Foundation, and the New York City school system. For several years, reformers in New York City have been carving large comprehensive high schools into several smaller "learning academies" or "schools within a school" housed within the same building. Now the goal is to create 200 small high schools citywide—an effort that the Gates Foundation is supporting with a $51 million grant awarded in September 2003. Gates awarded another big-city district, San Diego, with $11 million to turn three large high schools into 18 smaller academies.

Support for small schools also comes from some advocates of charter schools and school vouchers. To justify the push for smaller schools, some proponents point to the fact that, on average, private schools are a third smaller than public schools, an indication that the private sector is responding to the market's demand for smaller schools.

Yet there has not been enough rigorous research examining the effects of school size on student achievement. The basic problem researchers face is that families make educational and residential choices that determine the schools their children attend. If small schools attract unusual students to begin with, then it will be hard to know whether differences in achievement between students in small and large schools have anything to do with the schools themselves or are merely reflecting preexisting differences between the students. However, the sudden growth in the size of the average school during the mid-20th century created a kind of natural experiment that enabled me to address this issue without many of the drawbacks that have hindered earlier research.

Vanishing Act

The United States was once a nation of small schools. In fact, as late as the 1930s, most American schools employed just one teacher. Over the ensuing decades, however, the number of schools declined rapidly, from a peak of 271,000 in 1920 to a low of around 83,000 schools in the late 1980s (since then, about 10,000 schools have been added nationwide). Meanwhile, public school attendance roughly doubled between 1929 and 1969, the period of most rapid consolidation. The combination of consolidation and rising attendance produced a five-fold increase in school size during this short time, with average daily attendance per school rising from 87 to 440 students (see Figure 1). Schools employing just one teacher all but disappeared from the landscape; just 400 one-teacher schools remained as of 2000.

The movement to consolidate schools must be seen as part of the larger 20th-century effort to "professionalize" education. To the reformers known today as history's Progressives, putting schools in the hands of professional educators was seen as a cure for both the corruption of urban school systems and the parochialism of rural systems. That meant moving away from what they derided as the inefficient, unprofessional, and "backward" practices of small community schools.

In the view of Ellwood P. Cubberley, the longtime head of Stanford's school of education and leading reformer of the early 20th century, larger schools enjoyed three distinct advantages. First, larger schools would reduce the ratio of administrators to teachers, thus providing for more efficient, centralized administration. Second, at a time when many small schools did not even divide students by grade level, larger schools facilitated more specialized instruction—by age level, subject area, and level of ability. Finally, Cubberley argued that consolidated schools could provide better facilities at lower cost.

The desire to create larger schools frequently made it necessary to consolidate school districts as well (see Figure 2). Cubberley and other reformers of the day believed that one large school should replace five to seven existing schools, on average. However, at the time the average school district held only two schools. Thus consolidating five to seven schools required consolidating school districts as well.

As school districts became larger and more complex, day-to-day authority over schools gradually shifted from elected school boards to professional superintendents and administrators. From 1930 to 1970, about 9 out of 10 school board members nationwide saw their positions disappear.

These centralizing trends were encouraged by state officials, who spearheaded initiatives to consolidate local schools as part of broader efforts to expand state control over public education. In other words, not only was local control over education weakened by the elimination of most elected school boards, but the authority of the remaining boards was also eroded as state governments gradually extended their authority over issues such as accreditation, curriculum, and teacher certification.

These changes met with fierce local resistance, especially in rural areas, where the school was often the community's central institution. Consolidation of the local district—in particular, the loss of the town school—often threatened a community's social cohesion and economic vitality. To achieve their objectives, state education officials often had to provide

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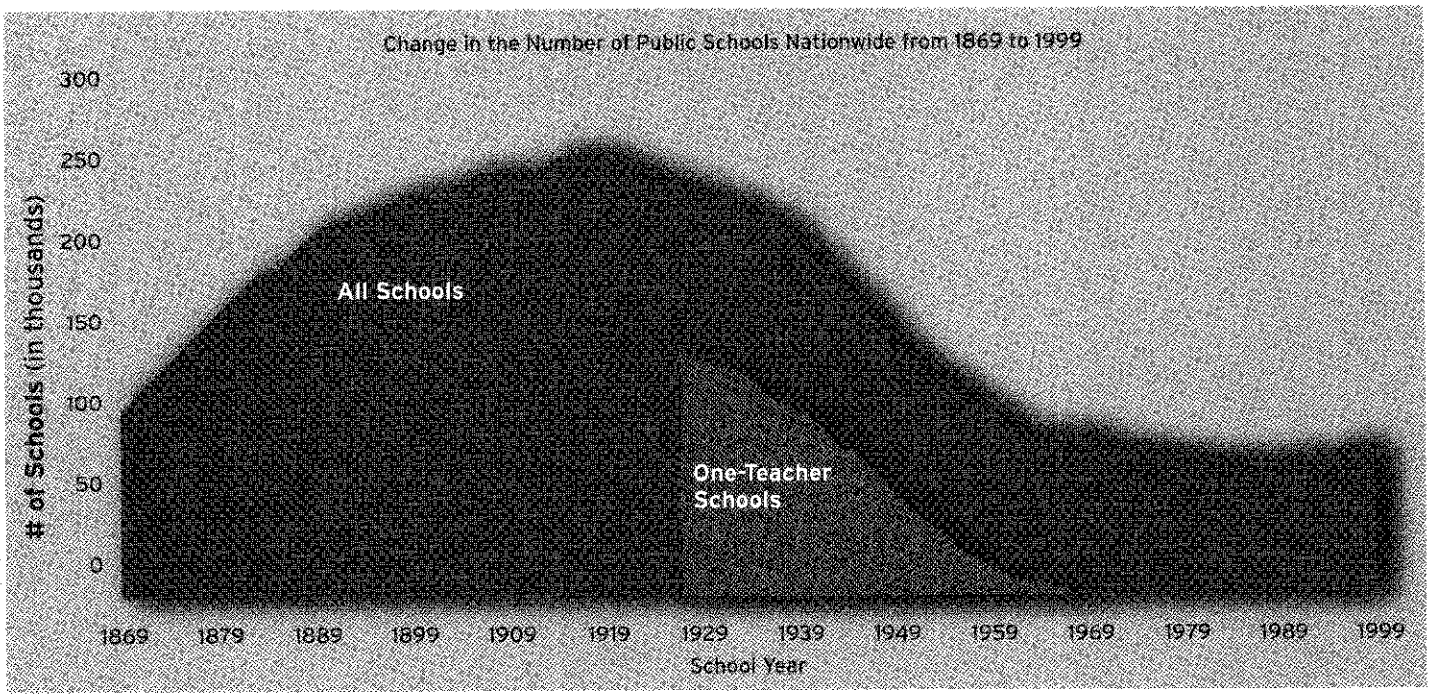
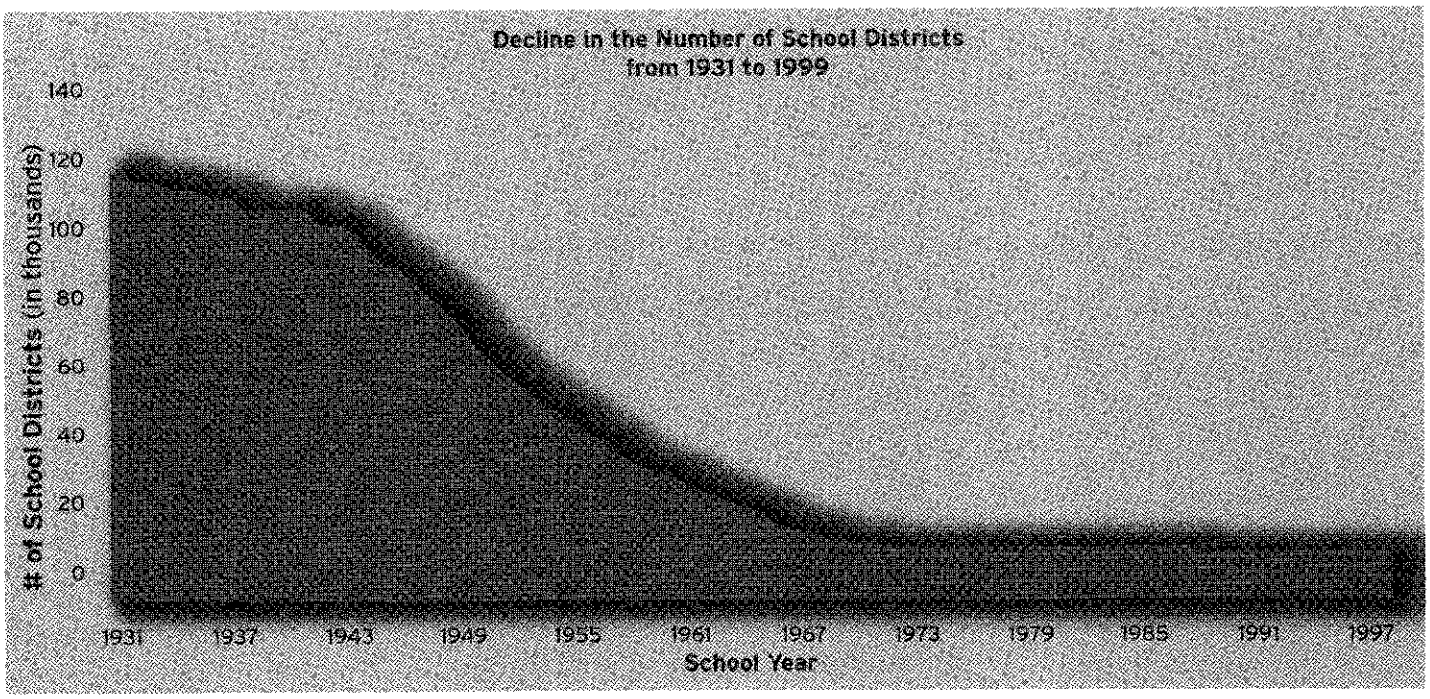
Wave of Consolidation (Figure 2)

During the mid-20th century, a rapid process of consolidation reduced the number of U.S. public schools by nearly two-thirds. The number of school districts has declined by 90 percent since 1930.





NOTE: Data for one-teacher schools available only after 1927. Some years interpolated by author.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

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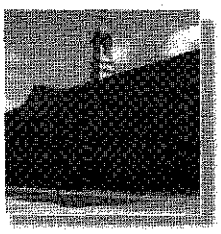
The small, informal, community-controlled schools of the 19th century were transformed into centralized, professionally run school bureaucracies.



strong fiscal incentives or simply force consolidation by redrawing district boundaries.

A series of related reforms, such as the lengthening of the school term, a decline in class sizes, and higher salaries for teachers, also took hold during this period. The overall effect was to transform the small, informal, community-controlled schools of the 19th century into centralized, professionally run school bureaucracies. The American public school system as we know it today was born during this brief, tumultuous period.

Previous Studies

Despite the dramatic scale and breakneck pace of these reforms, little is known about the consequences of district consolidation and the movement toward larger schools. The research literature of the 1920s through the 1970s focused mainly on resources rather than results. In general, researchers found that larger schools had better facilities, more highly qualified teachers and administrators, a greater depth and variety of courses, and more extracurricular activities. An influential 1967 report by James Conant, a former president of Harvard, concluded that large "comprehensive" high schools were more cost-efficient and provided higher quality schooling through a wider range of course offerings. However, Conant did not examine whether student achievement was any higher in large comprehensive high schools.

Beginning in the 1980s, scholars began to look at the relationship between school size and student achievement. These studies have been less favorable to large schools. Of seven studies reviewed by Mathew Andrews, William Duncombe, and John Yinger, only one found that performance increased as schools grew in size. The remaining six studies found decreasing returns to scale. One study found that African-American students in particular do worse in large schools; another found that the same was true of students of low socioeconomic status.

The literature on the effects of district size on student outcomes is smaller and less consistent in its findings. Of the handful of studies on the subject, a few find that students in smaller districts do better, while a few others find just the opposite. Because the studies were conducted in different states, it is hard to know exactly what accounts for the inconsistent results.

Harvard economist Caroline Hoxby took a different approach in a 2000 study, analyzing the effects of competition among school districts rather than the effects of district size per se. She found that student performance was higher in those metropolitan areas with many school districts, such as Boston, than in a single school district that enrolls most children, as in Miami. Her results suggest that, independent of any returns to scale, the consolidation of districts in a metropolitan area would dampen school performance by reducing competition among them.

Although the existing research provides no consensus on the effects of district size on school quality, it will nevertheless be important to take into account changes in this variable due to district consolidation when examining the effects of school size, because the two reforms were so closely associated.

Data and Methodology

Standardized tests were not in wide use until after the consolidation movement had largely run its course. Thus it is impossible to examine the effects of school consolidation using conventional measures of student achievement.

Instead, using data from the 1980 U.S. Census, I looked at one million white males born between 1920 and 1949 to see how characteristics of the school systems in which they were educated affected the value of their education in the labor market. (I restricted the analysis to white males because of the dramatic changes in the opportunities available to women and minorities during this period. Also, as the census tells us only where people were born and where they currently live, I assumed they were educated in the same state in which they were born.)

My analytical strategy involved two distinct steps. First, I estimated the increase in wages that can be attributed to an additional year of schooling for workers born in each of the 48 mainland states during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. This yielded 144 distinct estimates (48 states times three birth cohorts) of the labor-market value of schooling for individuals from a given state. Second, I examined the relationship between the increase in wages associated with an additional year of schooling and the average size of a state's schools.

To ensure that my estimates of the returns to additional schooling in the first stage of the analysis were valid, I compared only individuals currently living in the same state who were born and presumably educated elsewhere. I also included other variables to take into account a variety of factors that could affect wages, such as labor-market experience, marital

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status, and residence in a large city. Finally, I allowed for the possibility that the value of an additional year of education may depend on the region of the country in which an individual currently lives.

In the second stage of the analysis, my estimates of the effects of school size on school quality are based only on changes in the value of additional schooling for students from a given state that are unrelated to national trends in the value of schooling—a difficult test to pass, but one that should increase confidence in the findings.

Finally, I also accounted at this second stage for several other changes in each state's school system that might explain changes in the value of schooling for students educated there. These characteristics include the average district size; student-teacher ratio; length of the school term; teachers' wages (measured relative to average wages in the state); and the state government's share of funding for public education. These data are recorded in the *Biennial Survey of Education* and later the *Digest of Education Statistics*.

Results

Using this strategy, I found that smaller schools had a significant positive effect on students' wages as adults. That is, students from states with smaller schools fared better in the labor market. Moreover, the effects are quite substantial. My findings suggest that increasing a state's average school size by 100 students was associated with a decline of one-third of a standard deviation in the rate of return to education for students educated there. In plain English, this would amount to a 3.7 percent decline in earnings for a high-school graduate.

As noted above, these estimates take into account changes in other characteristics of state school systems that occurred during this same period. Interestingly, among the results for these other characteristics, I find evidence of a positive effect of district size on adult wages. All else being equal (including school size), students from states with larger districts saw higher returns to education. The estimated effect of district size is smaller in magnitude than the effect of school size, but is still statistically significant.

The two-step strategy used to generate these results was first developed by economists David Card and Alan Krueger in order to examine the effects of school resources on school quality. An important critique of this strategy—put forward in a 1996 paper by James Heckman, Anne Layne-Farrar, and Petra Todd—is that it is not able to distinguish the influence of education on people's future wages from the effects of their family background or other early neighborhood characteristics. Because my analysis closely follows Card and Krueger's, these issues warrant attention.

In what ways could a person's family background or neighborhood characteristics potentially distort my findings? Consider what drove the consolidation movement. As discussed earlier, consolidation was just one of a series of Progressive reforms designed to centralize and professionalize the American school system. Of course, the pace of reform differed from state to state. States where reforms took hold more quickly might also have had voters who deeply valued education. Thus the effects of consolidation reported above might actually reflect the influence of being raised in a community that places a high value on education.

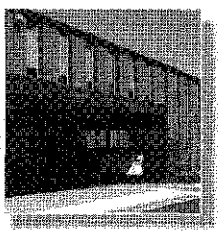
This is not a source of much concern regarding the finding on school size. Given the views of prominent experts of the time, communities that highly valued education were more likely to create larger schools. If the community's influence were driving the results, we would expect increases in school size to be associated with higher wages. But I found just the opposite: the growth in school size led to declines in wages. So the finding on school size appears safe from this critique.

At the same time, my results with respect to the consolidation of school districts are less certain. Since consolidation was pushed by reformers, the finding of positive effects from consolidation could reflect the benefits of being raised in a state whose citizens were deeply committed to education (and therefore more likely to adopt these reforms), which puts the district size results in question.

A Closer Look

We can do better than speculate on other factors related to these results, however. To further explore whether early community factors could account for the observed school and district size effects, I added two more variables to the analysis: the per-capita income in each state at the time each cohort of men entered school and the corresponding percentage of each state's population classified as rural by the census. These variables serve as measures of a state's affluence and thus should serve as a rough proxy for a state population's commitment to education.

Using this strategy, I found that smaller schools had a significant positive effect on students' wages as adults.



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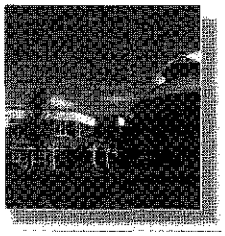
Small schools in large districts are optimal, all else being equal. But large districts, unfortunately, tend to create large schools.



The resulting estimates indicate that increases in parental income actually had a negative effect on the increase in students' wages associated with an extra year of education. Apparently children raised in less-affluent states derived greater benefits from education. Moreover, the estimated effects of school size and district size were essentially the same after including the income variable. The share of a state's population classified as rural had no significant association with the returns to education, nor did including it in the model alter the effects of school size and district size. It therefore seems unlikely that the observed effects of district size are actually caused by the influence of a rural upbringing.

In sum, the results of these validity tests indicate that the finding that the growth in average school size during this period led to a decline in school quality is remarkably robust. Based solely on the results of these tests, the finding that creating larger districts improved school quality appears to be equally sound. However, more caution is necessary in interpreting this second result. It is ultimately difficut to rule out the possibility that the effects of district consolidation are attributable to other, unobserved characteristics of residents of the states that led the way in consolidating districts or to other reforms they adopted at the same time. Nonetheless, based on the existing evidence, I would conclude that small schools in large districts are optimal, all else being equal.

However, all else is rarely equal. Large districts tend to create large schools. Whether school board members and superintendents in large districts will be willing to devolve authority to a large number of small schools remains to be seen. If they are not, saying that larger districts have a positive effect after controlling for school size may be a bit like saying butter is a health food after controlling for its fat content.

Conclusion

This study represents the first attempt to assess the impact of the school consolidation movement on the quality of students' education during the period of greatest consolidation, from 1930 to 1970. Ellwood P. Cubberley and his fellow reformers would not be pleased with the results. Though they derided small schools as inefficient and provincial, the findings presented here suggest that students who attended small schools fared better in the labor market. While there may have been modest gains associated with increasing the size of districts (or with other reforms adopted at the same time), these gains were far outweighed by the harmful effects of larger schools.

For several reasons, however, it is important to be cautious in drawing policy implications from the findings regarding school size. For one thing, I have not examined any data on school size from a year more recent than 1966. Much can change over four decades. Also, the findings apply only to the average size of schools in a given state, making it difficult to ascertain the "right" size for any individual school. Likewise, the data did not allow me to report separate findings for elementary and secondary schools; size may matter more in one than the other.

In addition, I focused on only one of the channels through which school size may influence earnings: the rate of return to a year of education. There are at least two additional channels to be considered: the effect on the level of earnings and the effect on educational attainment. Understanding how school size influences earnings through these various channels could lead to a more complex picture than that presented here.

Finally, the results presented here do little to explain what it is about small schools that improves student outcomes. Those who study small schools have suggested that students are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and their parents are more likely to be involved. But the results presented here cannot address the validity of these claims. Knowing the means by which small schools increase achievement is crucial in evaluating whether trends such as the slicing of larger high schools into several smaller schools or "academies" are likely to succeed. Small schools of the past were separately housed. Whether that fact was crucial to their success is unknown.

In short, while my results should encourage small-school reformers, more work along these lines is clearly needed before jumping on the small-schools bandwagon.

Christopher Berry is an assistant professor at the Harris School for Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago. He conducted this research while a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance.

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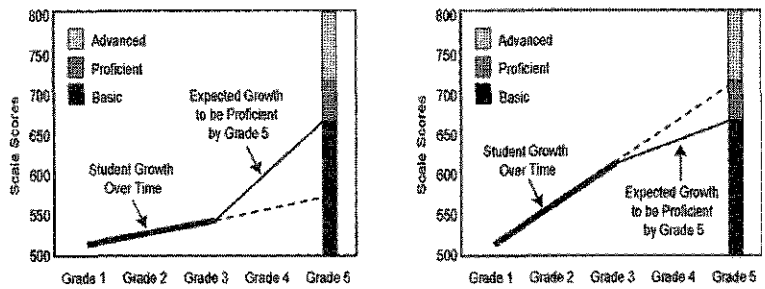
"No Child Left Behind" — How Do We Make it Work?

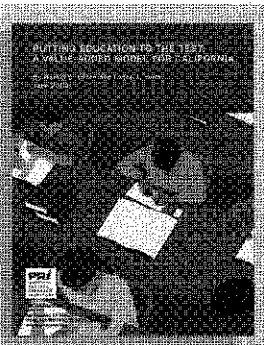
The federal No Child Left Behind Act has spurred states to test students on basic subject knowledge. Now the goal must be to use this test data to boost the achievement of each and every student.

As educators, parents, and lawmakers know, this is a tall order. But a new study by the Pacific Research Institute (PRI) shows that such goals can be achieved with the implementation of a value-added model linked to proficiency on state tests.



An illustration of the REACH model for two students. *The REACH model informs educators that the student in the left panel is unlikely to reach proficiency unless his instruction is modified.*

Putting Education to the Test, by Harold C. Doran and Lance T. Izumi, provides a value-added model for tracking and improving annual student achievement growth. The authors apply the model to California and also explain how it could be used in any state.



PRI
PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Read more about this practical strategy for reform at
http://www.pacificresearch.org/press/edu/ValueAddedAdvert.htm.
For a print copy, contact Susan Martin at PRI, 415.955.6120 or smartin@pacificresearch.org.

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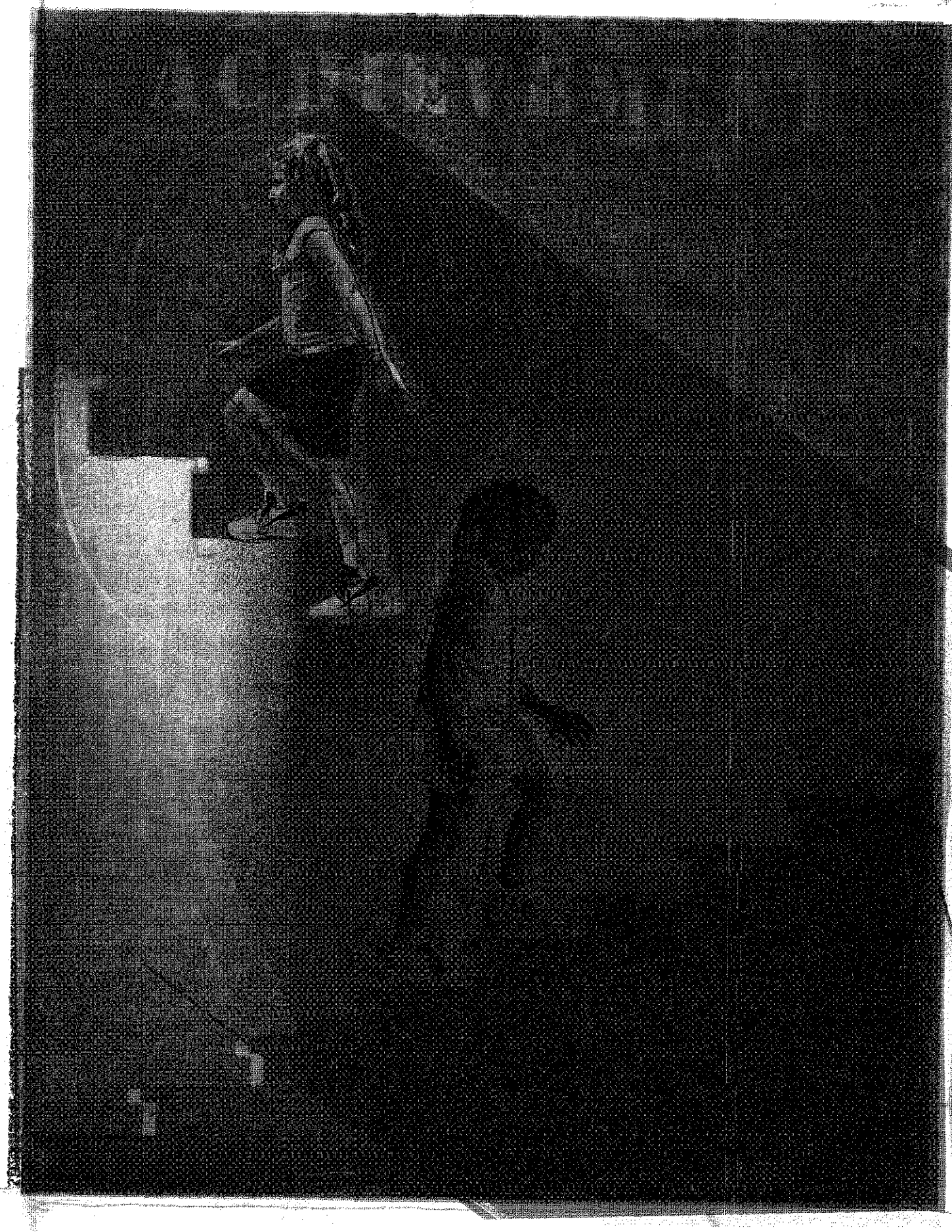

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN CHUCKMAN

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Falling Behind

As children move through school, the black-white achievement gap expands

On average, black students typically score one standard deviation below white students on standardized tests—roughly the difference in performance between the average 4th grader and the average 8th grader. Historically, what has come to be known as the black-white test-score gap has emerged before children enter kindergarten and has tended to widen over time.

What are the causes of this persistent gap in achievement? In study after study, scholars have investigated the effects of differences among white and black students in their socioeconomic status, family structure, and neighborhood characteristics and in the quality of their schools. To be sure, socioeconomic status and the trappings of poverty are important factors in explaining racial differences in educational achievement. Yet a substantial gap remains even after these crucial influences are accounted for.

Gaining a better understanding of what causes the test-score gap is of great importance because eliminating the gap could yield great advances in the well-being of African-Americans. In separate studies, Derek Neal and William Johnson in 1996 and June O'Neill in 1990 found that most of the wage gap between black and white adults disappears once the data are adjusted to reflect their scores on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test; in other words, those adults with similar scores earned similar wages. Thus closing the test-score gaps that emerge in high school may be a critical prerequisite to reducing wage inequality between the races. As scholars

BY ROLAND G. FRYER AND STEVEN D. LEVITT

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Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips write, "Reducing the black-white test score gap would do more to promote racial equality than any other strategy that commands broad political support."

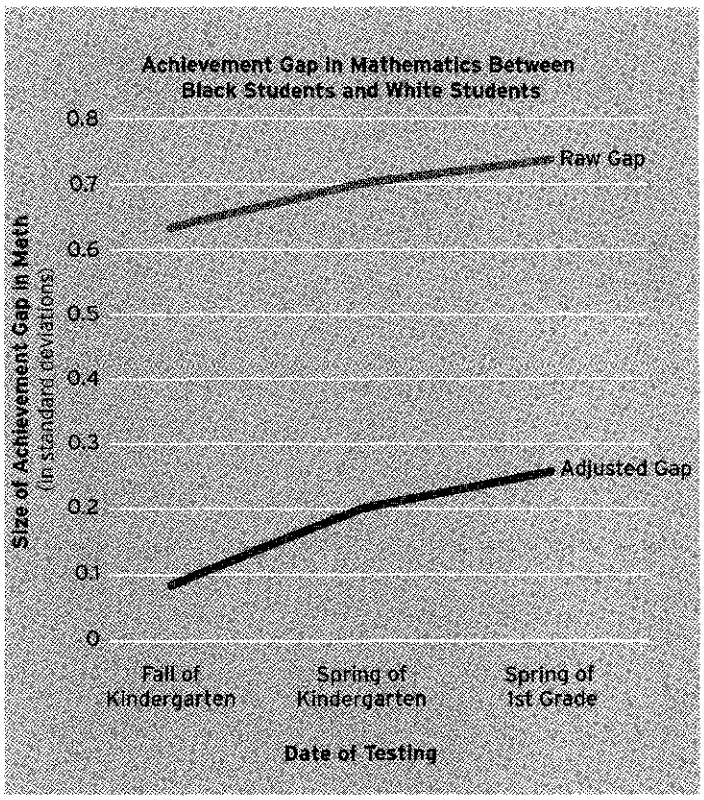
To take a fresh look at the gap and its sources, we examined a new data set, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort, compiled by the U.S. Department of Education. The results are quite surprising: after adjusting the data for the effects of only a few observable characteristics, the black-white test-score gap in math and reading for students entering kindergarten essentially disappeared. Put simply, white and black children with similar personal and family background characteristics achieved similar test scores (see Figure 1).

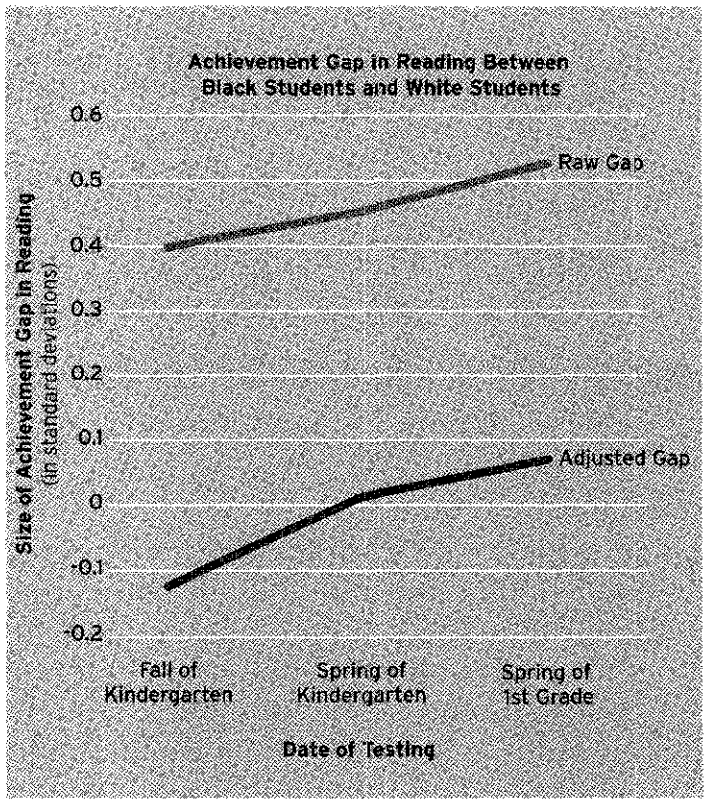
However, our results show that the achievement gap, while negligible among black and non-Hispanic white children with similar characteristics when they enter kindergarten, expands as they grow older. From the beginning of kindergarten to the end of first grade, black students lose 20 percent of a standard deviation (approximately 10 percent of a standard deviation each year) relative to white students with similar characteristics. If the gap were to continue to grow at this rate, by 5th grade the average black student would be half a standard deviation behind his white counterpart—a residual gap similar in magnitude to that found in previous analyses. Hispanic children do not experience this widening test-score gap relative to otherwise similar white students; indeed, they systematically close the gap, perhaps because their initial scores are artificially low due to the relative inexperience with the English language among some immigrants and their children (see Figure 2).

Here we present our findings and explore possible reasons why they diverge from those of previous studies. We also consider various explanations for the expanding gap between black and white students as they move through school.

The Growing Gap (Figure 1)

Black kindergartners and white kindergartners with similar socioeconomic backgrounds now achieve at similar levels. However, the raw gap in test scores remains large and both the raw and adjusted gaps grow as students move through school.





NOTE: In the figures above, the Raw Gap represents the actual difference in test scores between black students and white students. The Adjusted Gap represents the remaining inter-ethnic test-score gap after adjusting the data for the influence of students' background characteristics. Adjusted results control for socioeconomic status, number of books in the home, gender, age, birth weight, WIC participation, and mother's age at birth of first child. All adjusted gaps are statistically significant at the .05 level. Where the results indicate that the gap is negative, black children with similar characteristics actually score higher than their white counterparts.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort (1998), U.S. Department of Education

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The raw black-white achievement gaps, while sizable, are substantially smaller than those observed in earlier data sets for children of the same age.

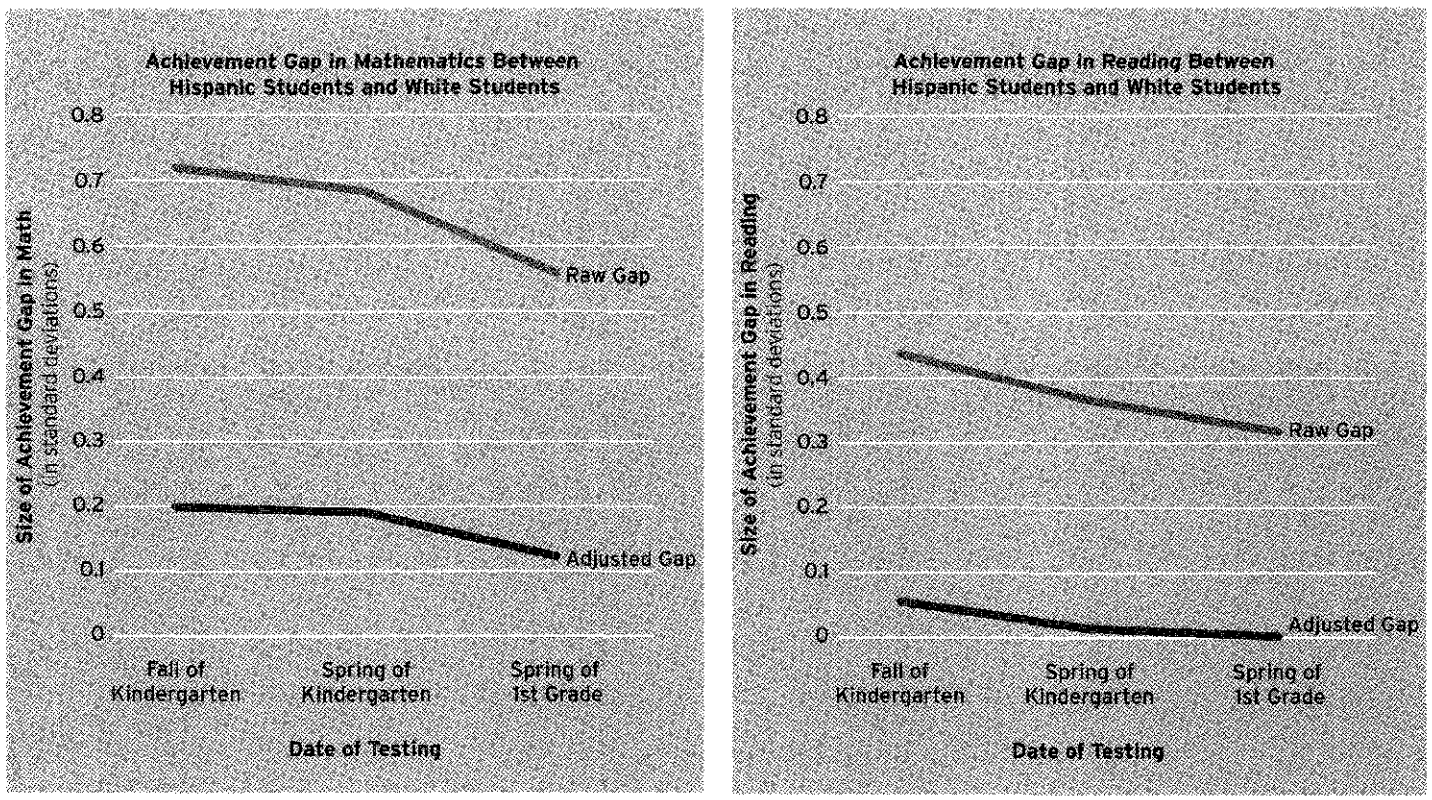
The Survey

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study includes a nationally representative survey of more than 20,000 children who entered kindergarten in 1998. The full sample was interviewed in the fall and spring of kindergarten and in the spring of 1st grade. Moreover, a random sample of a quarter of the respondents was also interviewed in the fall of 1st grade. The full sample included an average of more than 20 children per school in each of the roughly 1,000 schools participating in the study, making it possible to conduct within-school analyses.

Students took standardized tests in the fall of kindergarten and in the spring of 1st grade. They were initially given oral tests, since most of them did not know how to read. Overall, non-Hispanic white students scored 0.27 standard deviations above the average on the math exam in the fall of kindergarten, while black students fell 0.36 standard deviations below the average, yielding a raw black-white gap of 0.63 standard deviations. By the spring of 1st grade, the raw gap in mathematics increased to 0.73 standard deviations. The initial black-white gap in reading was smaller (0.4 standard deviations). As in math,

Hispanic Children Close the Gap (Figure 2)

There remains a substantial gap between the test scores of Hispanic children and white children, but it shrinks as Hispanic students move through school.



NOTE: In the figures above, the Raw Gap represents the actual difference in test scores between Hispanic students and white students. The Adjusted Gap represents the remaining inter-ethnic test-score gap after adjusting the data for the influence of students' background characteristics. Adjusted results control for socioeconomic status, number of books in the home, gender, age, birth weight, WIC participation, and mother's age at birth of first child. Adjusted gap in reading is statistically insignificant for Spring kindergarten and 1st Grade test results.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort (1998), U.S. Department of Education

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however, the raw test-score gap in reading widened substantially, to 0.53 standard deviations, by the end of 1st grade.

Note that these raw black-white gaps, while sizable, are substantially smaller than those observed in earlier data sets for children of the same age. For instance, in a study published in 1998, Meredith Phillips and her colleagues reported a raw black-white test-score gap of more than one standard deviation in vocabulary using data sets collected between 1980 and 1987.

The initial test-score gaps for Hispanic students in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study data were even greater than for blacks—0.72 standard deviations in math and 0.43 standard deviations in reading. However, these gaps narrowed somewhat by the end of 1st grade, reaching 0.56 and 0.31 standard deviations, respectively. After two years in school, then, Hispanic students were performing better relative to whites than were their black counterparts.

After two years in school, Hispanic students were performing better relative to whites than were their black counterparts.

We also analyzed teachers' subjective assessments of each child's math and reading achievement. Teachers were asked to answer 20 questions about each child's academic performance. The patterns in the teacher assessments mirror those in the test-score data: black and Hispanic students start out substantially below whites, and black students lose ground over the first two years of school, whereas Hispanics maintain their position relative to whites.

Most of the available data on students' background characteristics were collected only once or changed little over time for individual students. The most important of these characteristics is a composite measure of socioeconomic status developed by the survey's researchers. The components of the socioeconomic status measure are parents' level of education, parents' occupational status, and household income. On the whole, black children were being reared in circumstances less likely to be conducive to academic achievement than those experienced by white children; in general they have lower socioeconomic status and fewer children's books in the home, to name just two disadvantages. Hispanics were also worse off than whites on average.

Results

Adjusting the test scores for these characteristics one at a time allows us to isolate the effects of each one. First consider socioeconomic status. As expected, the summary measure of the economic condition of students' households is a strong predictor of their incoming test scores: an improvement in socioeconomic status of one standard deviation is associated with an increase of 0.45 standard deviations in both math and reading test scores. Thus adjusting the data for the effects of socioeconomic status reduces the estimated racial gaps in test scores by more than 40 percent in math and more than 66 percent in reading.

The number of books in the household is a useful proxy for the home environment's contribution to academic success. Adjusting the test-score data for this factor reduces the gap even more. On average, black students in the sample had 39 children's books in their home, compared with an average of 93 books among white students. Taking this difference into account cuts the black-white test-score gap to less than a fourth of a standard deviation in math and completely eliminates the gap in reading. The gap between white and Hispanic students also shrinks.

We next adjust the data for the effects of gender, age, birth weight, the age at which the mother had her first child, and participation in the WIC program (a supplemental food program for women, infants and children restricted to low-income families). As expected, the results indicate that older children, those with higher birth weights, and those with mothers who were older at the time of their first birth all score better. Children participating in the WIC program perform worse, suggesting that this variable is not capturing any benefits the nutrition program might provide, but rather that WIC eligibility is an indicator for growing up poor. All else being equal, female students seem to perform at higher levels than males in reading and at the same level in math.

More important for this analysis, adding these variables to the equation further accounts for the differences between the test scores of whites and those of blacks and Hispanics. In fact, the estimates suggest that black children with characteristics similar to their white peers score slightly better than whites in reading and only slightly worse in math (see Figure 1). Only a small gap persists for Hispanics (see Figure 2).

Of particular interest is the fact that only a few social background characteristics need to be taken into account in order to eliminate the black-white gap. Once we adjusted the data for the effects of socioeconomic status, birth weight,

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participation in WIC, and a few other variables, we were able to fully account for the difference in test scores. Adjusting the data for a range of other factors, such as neighborhood characteristics, family size, whether the mother works, whether English is spoken at home, and participation in preschool, does not appreciably change the results. This is not to say that such variables as neighborhood characteristics have no effect, only that the effect of such variables is already captured by the handful of social background characteristics, such as WIC participation, that we incorporated into our analysis.

To address this potential source of bias, we examined the effects of our key control variables for students of each race separately. The effects of most factors on black, white, and Hispanic students were statistically indistinguishable. However, it turns out that the black children in our sample were less responsive to changes in socioeconomic status than the white children: a one-standard-deviation improvement in socioeconomic status for a black child was associated with a 0.18 standard deviation increase in math scores, compared with 0.32 among white children.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL EPPRIDGE/TIMELIFE PICTURES

Black children and white children with similar family background characteristics start school at similar levels of achievement.

To this point the analysis has assumed that children of different races will respond similarly to changes in their socioeconomic status, home environments, and so on. However, black children tend to live in situations that are less conducive to learning. If they do not derive as much benefit as white children from improvements in their home environments, our results may overstate the degree to which the gap is attributable to these factors.

All told, these race-specific estimates suggest that a black child who had the same characteristics as the average white child in the sample would score 0.21 standard deviations lower than the white child in math and would be almost exactly even in reading. Thus, to the extent that public policies are designed to improve the environments experienced by black children, our initial estimates may slightly overstate the ground that would be gained by blacks. This logic also holds for Hispanics.

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Why So Different?

Nevertheless, the fact that the black-white test-score gap essentially disappears when sufficient controls are included is striking. In past research, a substantial gap has always persisted. The 1998 study by Meredith Phillips and her colleagues, mentioned earlier, had the greatest success in explaining racial differences in achievement, yet the unexplained portion of the achievement gap on the vocabulary test used in their study was still so large that it nearly exceeded the raw gap in reading and mathematics we found in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey data.

Why do our results differ so sharply from those of previous research? There are three leading explanations: 1) the sample of children included in the data set used by Phillips, the Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (CNLSY), especially in the early years, may be nonrepresentative; 2) better information on students' background characteristics is available in the Early Childhood survey; and 3) blacks born into recent cohorts have made real gains relative to blacks born a decade earlier.

Although plausible, the first two explanations appear to play only a small role empirically. However, real gains by blacks in recent cohorts do appear to be an important part of the divergence between our results and past research. By limiting the CNLSY data to cohorts born in the same years as the children in our data set, we found raw test-score gaps only half as large as those found in the earlier cohorts of data used by Phillips and remarkably close to those found in our data set.

Real gains among black children in recent years could explain this result. However, even after adjusting the data to account for similar factors, we were still not able to eliminate the achievement gaps among later cohorts in the data set used by Phillips. After introducing the same set of controls we used in the analysis above, the estimated black-white achievement gaps in recent cohorts of the CNLSY were about 0.5 standard deviations in math and 0.4 in vocabulary. Thus, although the raw gaps are similar in the two data sets, larger residual gaps remain in the CNLSY for reasons we cannot explain.

The Growing Gap

Our results suggest that black children and white children with similar characteristics now start school at similar levels of achievement. But what happens as they age?

In raw test scores, black students lose some ground relative to whites between the fall of kindergarten and the spring of 1st grade. But once the data are adjusted for the effects of the key background characteristics identified above, black students appear to lose much more ground than they do in the raw averages, falling 0.16 standard deviations in math and 0.19 standard deviations in reading relative to white students (see Figure 1). If black students in the sample continue to lose ground through 9th grade at the rate experienced in the first two years of school, they will lag behind white students on average by a full standard deviation in raw math and reading scores and by more than two-thirds of a standard deviation in math even after controlling for observable characteristics (the gap would be substantially smaller in reading). Raw gaps of that magnitude would be similar to those found in previous studies of high-school-age children.

By contrast, Hispanics show gains relative to whites between the beginning of kindergarten and the end of 1st grade (see Figure 2). Thus black students are losing ground not only relative to whites, but even more relative to Hispanics.

Why does the black-white test-score gap grow as children age? Let's consider a few plausible explanations.

✦ *Are black students losing ground because they attend worse schools?*

There is substantial racial segregation in U.S. schools. In our data, which sample roughly 20 children in each of approximately 1,000 schools, 35 percent of those schools have not a single black child. The average black student in our sample attends a school that is 59 percent black and 8 percent Hispanic. In contrast, the typical white student attends a school that is only 6 percent black and 5 percent Hispanic. Given that blacks and whites have relatively little overlap in the schools they attend, differences in school quality could well explain why black students are losing ground.

To investigate this question, we compared the progress of white and black students who attended the same school. If the gap between these students remained the same as in the overall sample, this would suggest that the quality of the schools is not playing a major role in the expanding achievement gap.

In fact, black children who attend the same schools as whites lose only a third as much ground as they do relative to whites in the overall sample. These findings are consistent with—but not definitive proof of—the argument that systematic differences in the schools attended by white and black children may explain the divergence in test scores.

If on average blacks attend schools that are worse than those attended by whites, one might expect that this would be reflected in the schools' characteristics. Relative to otherwise similar whites, blacks do attend schools with more students eligible for the federal lunch program and schools in which subjective reports from officials indicated higher levels of gang activity, loitering in front of the school, and litter around the school.

Still, there are significant weaknesses in the argument that differences in school quality explain the divergent trajectories of whites and blacks. For instance, there seems to be little difference between the average class sizes, teachers' levels of education, number of computers in the classroom, and Internet

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connections in schools attended by blacks versus those attended by whites. More important, the gap between blacks and whites continues to widen even after the data are adjusted to reflect differences in all of the school characteristics for which data are available. Indeed, the available measures of schools' characteristics as a group explain only a small fraction of the variation in student outcomes. Furthermore, both Hispanic and Asian children also experience worse schools than whites, but neither of those groups is losing ground. All in all, the issue is murky—perhaps because the measures of school quality in the data are inadequate.

As compared with earlier generations of students, the current cohort of young, black children has made real gains to whites.

✦ *Does the importance of parental and environmental inputs grow as children age?*

Black children tend to grow up in environments that are less conducive to high achievement. If the importance of parental and environmental inputs grew as children age, black students would be expected to lose ground relative to whites. But if that were true, one would expect to observe a widening of the raw gaps between blacks and whites; to the extent that our control variables adequately captured a child's environment, the residual gap would remain constant. In fact, however, the residual gap increases more than the raw gap. In other words, the data suggest that the relative importance of factors outside of school decreases over time, presumably because schools become such a central part of a child's life.

✦ *Do black children suffer worse "summer setbacks" when school is not in session?*

Several scholars have argued that black students lose more ground over the summer than white students because of their relatively worse home and neighborhood environments. Our data provide a unique opportunity to test this hypothesis because a subset of the sample was tested both in the spring of kindergarten and early in the fall of 1st grade.

On the raw scores, there is little difference before and after the summer break; to the extent there is any gap, it favors black students. With controls, black students lose ground slightly to whites over the summer in math, but the result is not statistically significant. Black students make slight gains in reading. Thus there is little evidence that differential learning over the summer can help to explain the growing achievement gap.

✦ *Can biased expectations among teachers explain why black students lose ground?*

If, as some have argued, white teachers have lower expectations for black children, one would predict that black students with white teachers would lose more ground than black students with black teachers. We found that black children who have at least one black teacher start out performing somewhat worse than their white peers in math and slightly better in reading, relative to black students who have no black teachers. By the end of 1st grade, however, the black-white test-score gap is greater for students who have at least one black teacher. This is exactly the opposite of what one would predict from a discrimination story.

Conclusion

Compared with the results of previous studies, our findings provide reason for optimism. We find smaller achievement gaps, in both the raw and the adjusted scores, for children born in the early 1990s than others had found for earlier birth cohorts. It could well be that, as compared with earlier generations of students, the current cohort of blacks has made real gains relative to whites. Indeed, recent cohorts show smaller raw black-white gaps across multiple data sets—a truly promising sign.

Once students enter school, however, the gap between white and black children grows, even after controlling for observable influences. We speculate that blacks are losing ground relative to whites because they attend lower-quality schools that are less well maintained and managed as indicated by signs of social discord. Though we recognize that we have not provided definitive proof, this is the only hypothesis that receives any empirical support.

Roland G. Fryer Jr. is a junior fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows and a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research. Steven D. Levitt is a professor of economics at the University of Chicago.

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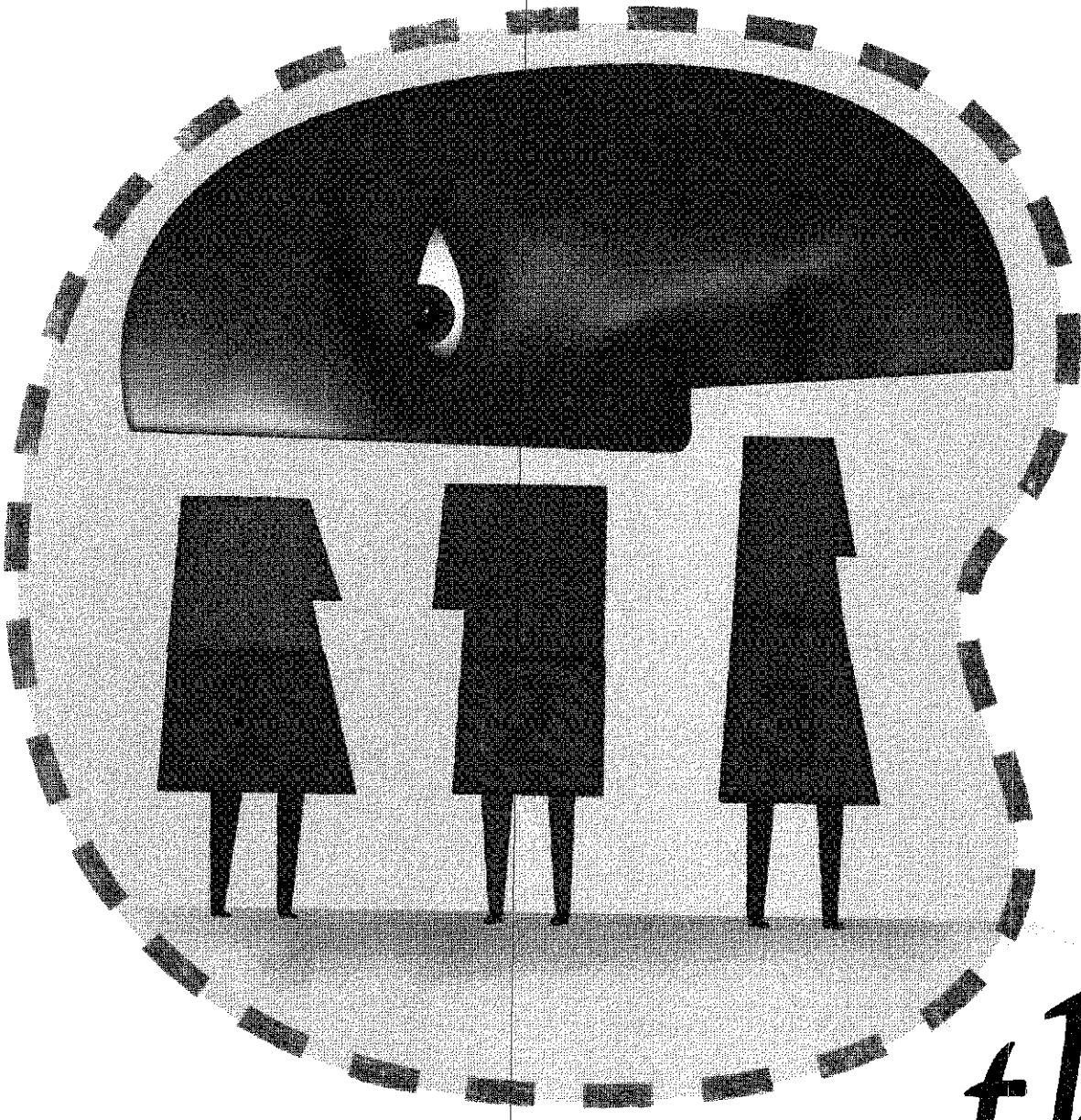

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The tracking movement

Despite the efforts of the educational progressives, tracking remains standard practice

BY MAUREEN T. HALLINAN

The practice that has come to be known as "tracking" began as a response to the influx of immigrant children into America's schools during the early 20th century. To educate this newly diverse student population, school officials thought it necessary to sort children into different "tracks" based on their ability or past performance. As school reformer Ellwood P. Cubberley stated in 1909, "Our city schools will soon be forced to give up the exceedingly democratic idea that all are equal, and our society devoid of classes . . . and to begin a specialization of educational effort along many lines." The advent of the IQ test and standardized achievement tests accelerated this trend by making the sorting process more apparently scientific.

In the early days of tracking, junior-high and high-school students were assigned to academic, general, or vocational tracks. At one extreme students were being groomed for college, while at the other they prepared to enter trades such as plumbing or secretarial work. By midcentury, a majority of secondary schools used some form of tracking. The practice was especially prevalent in large comprehensive high schools.

Today this extreme form of tracking is relatively rare. In the early 1970s, policymakers and educators, fearing that America was in danger of losing its competitive edge, began insisting that all students have access to a rigorous academic curriculum. States passed minimum graduation standards that required students to take a

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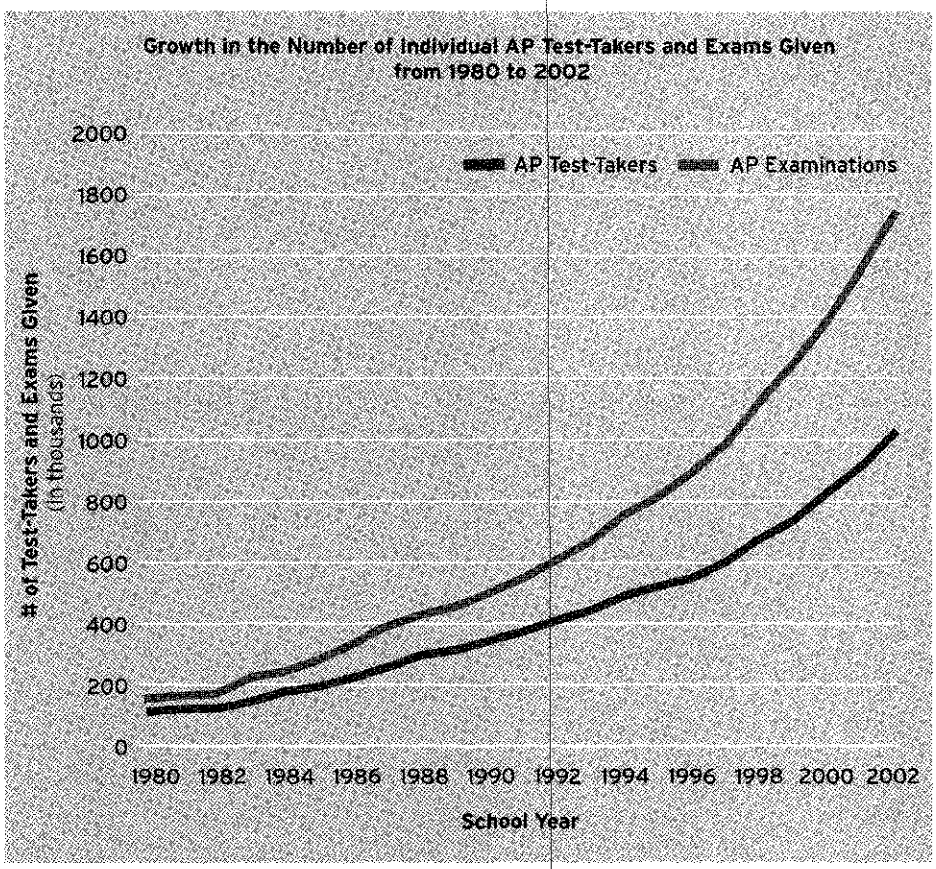
AP Testing on the Rise (Figure 1)

Advanced Placement (AP) courses represent an increasingly popular form of ability tracking. Since 1980, the number of students sitting for AP exams has increased more than sevenfold. The College Board estimates that just one-third of all students enrolled in AP courses actually sit for the exam.



NOTE: The number of exams given exceeds the number of individual test-takers because test-takers may take exams in more than one subject. Totals include a small percentage of non-U.S. students.

SOURCES: College Board; U.S. Department of Education

certain number of courses in the core subjects of English, mathematics, social studies, and science. And the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report recommended even tougher standards. In the ensuing two decades, the percentage of students taking four years of each core academic subject increased dramatically.

With the new emphasis on preparing every student for college, tracking in its modern form has come to mean grouping students by ability within subjects. In each subject, students are assigned to advanced, regular, or basic courses depending on their past performance. For instance, students in the advanced track might take pre-calculus as juniors in high school and calculus as seniors, while students in the basic track might go only as far as algebra II or geometry. The creation and growth of Advanced Placement courses is perhaps the best example of how tracking has become an institutionalized practice (see Figure 1).

The Backlash

Educators broadly support the practice of tracking in its modern form. Teachers find that tracking facilitates instruction by making it easier to gear lessons to the ability level of the whole class. Parents of high-performing students also favor tracking because research shows that students assigned to high-ability groups make greater gains in achievement. However, in studies published in 1986 and 1999, my colleagues and I found that students assigned to low-ability groups score lower on standardized tests than if they had been placed in mixed-ability or high-ability groups.

That finding lies at the core of a backlash against tracking that began in the 1980s. Critics argued that tracking, especially in practice, created greater learning opportunities for high-performing students at the expense of their lower-performing peers. Tracking's opponents alleged that students in lower tracks often had the weakest teachers in a school, an unchallenging curriculum, few academic role models, and low social status. Moreover, they argued, tracking enabled educators to claim that courses were academic or college preparatory in nature when, in fact, the content lacked even the semblance of rigor.

The movement picked up considerable momentum with the 1985 publication of Jeannie Oakes's deeply influential *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. Oakes provided empirical evidence of the disadvantages endured by students placed in lower tracks. In a similar vein, she revealed that some schools, under orders to desegregate, were promoting internal segregation by disproportionately assigning minority students to lower tracks. Overall, Oakes characterized tracking as an elitist practice that perpetuated the status quo by giving students from privileged families greater access to elite colleges and high-income careers. "Tracking is not in the best interests of most students," Oakes concluded. "It does not appear to be related to either increasing academic achievement or promoting positive attitudes and behaviors. Poor and minority students seem to have suffered most from tracking—and these are the very

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students on whom so many educational hopes are pinned."

At the height of the detracking movement, organizations including the National Governors Association, the National Education Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the California Department of Education came down in favor of detracking. Courts even mandated detracking reforms in some districts as part of efforts to desegregate the schools. For instance, in 1994 the San Jose Unified School District agreed to a consent decree that mandated detracking in grades K–9 and limited tracking in grades 10–12. But the response of school personnel was mixed. While many teachers favored detracking, a large number of parents, politicians, and other teachers resisted. As a result, while the schools became more integrated over time, and remedial classes were eliminated, detracking was never institutionalized as school practice.

Perhaps the most notorious episode in the detracking movement occurred in Massachusetts and California in the early 1990s. Officials in both states mandated that middle schools eliminate or reduce tracking. However, in *The Tracking Wars: State Reform Meets School Policy*, Brookings Institution scholar Tom Loveless demonstrated how schools, possessing a considerable degree of autonomy, were able to implement the new policy in ways that were consistent with local preferences. While neither state withdrew the mandate, the detracking movement could hardly claim victory.

Minor Inroads

To what extent has the detracking movement influenced the practices of schools and teachers? To date, no national longitudinal survey has provided solid information on the extensiveness of detracking and the manner in which it has been carried out. However, the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 asked a representative sample of teachers whether students were assigned to classes comprising students who were above average, average, below average, or ranging widely in achievement. Their responses suggested that, nationwide, 15 percent of 8th-grade students were heterogeneously grouped for English classes, 14 percent for mathematics, 12 percent for science, and 18 percent for social studies. The remaining large majority of students were in classes with students of roughly the same ability level.

A second study, the Survey of High School Curricular Options, sampled 912 secondary schools in 1993 to obtain information about curriculum differentiation. It reported that 86 percent of high schools offered courses in which students were tracked. The data revealed that 14 percent of 10th graders took math courses in groups in which students' abilities differed widely; the same was true for 28 percent of 10th graders in English.

A 2000 survey of all 174 public high schools in Maryland reported that two-thirds of the high schools used tracking in the four core subject areas, while 13 percent didn't track students in any of the core subjects (the survey's response rate was 79 percent). The remaining schools tracked in some but not all of the core areas. Interestingly, all of the 31 low-poverty, low-minority schools in the study used tracking, compared with only 36 percent of the 25 high-poverty, high-minority schools. In Maryland, at least, detracking is more likely in schools with a greater proportion of disadvantaged students. On the whole, however, the evidence suggests that the detracking movement has not transformed the way students are organized for instruction in America's schools.

What explains the resilience of tracking? For one thing, teaching in a detracked school is far more difficult than in a tracked school. Teachers who have been assigned to detracked classes often report that they must "teach to the middle" or omit some of the curriculum because they don't have time to instruct students at every different level within a class period. Moreover, detracking necessitates reallocating teachers and administrators, modifying the curriculum, and providing professional training. Schools may find these changes prohibitive for budgetary or logistical reasons. Finally, parents of high-ability students tend to prefer rigorous, homogeneous classes, while other

Tracking's opponents alleged that students in lower tracks often had the weakest teachers and an unchallenging curriculum.

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The detracking movement has challenged the role that "ability" plays in determining the curriculum to which students will be exposed.

parents are unconvinced that heterogeneous classes will benefit their children.

Subtle Influence

Despite widespread opposition to detracking and the failure of many efforts to institutionalize the policy, the detracking movement has had a major impact on school reform. While most schools still assign students to classes based on ability, the movement has heightened public awareness of the often inadequate resources and underwhelming curriculum provided to students in low-track classes.

Furthermore, the detracking movement has challenged widely held beliefs regarding the notion of "ability" and the role it plays in determining the kind of curriculum to which students will be exposed. More educators are now convinced that nearly all students are capable of mastering a challenging curriculum. New academic standards, state tests, and accountability requirements represent an effort to ensure that all students are given access to a rigorous curriculum. Detracking may never become widespread, but changes such as these are expected to improve the achievement of all students, particularly those who are ill served by the negative aspects of tracking as it is currently practiced.

Maureen T. Hallinan is a professor of sociology and director of the Center for Research on Educational Opportunity at the University of Notre Dame.

Educators nationwide have heard the refrain too often: Children from low-income homes have low academic achievement levels. But many public schools are proving that bleak economic backgrounds are not destiny.

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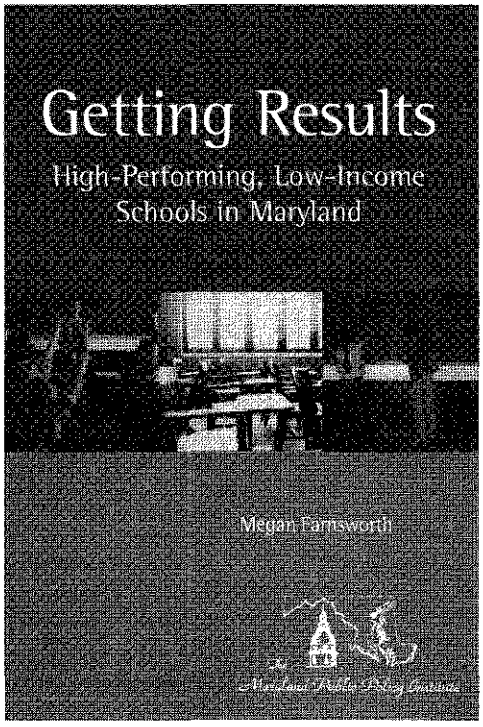

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The National History Club was founded in 2002 to promote the reading, writing, discussion and enjoyment of history among students and faculty at the secondary level.

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Selective Memory

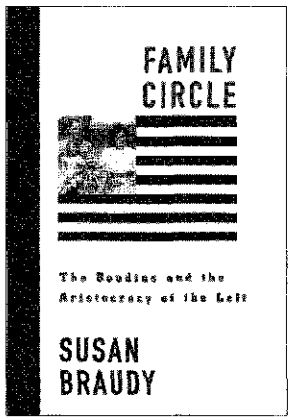
Textbooks whitewash the '60s

Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left

By Susan Braudy

Knopf, 2003, $27.95; 460 pages.

Reviewed by Diane Ravitch



While reviewing several American history textbooks, I was taken aback by the descriptions of the late 1960s. It is of course somewhat startling to see the events of one's own lifetime described as "history," but it is even more surprising to read admiring, uncritical accounts of the radical movements of that era. The texts now in use in American high schools never suggest that there was an antidemocratic, violent impulse at work in the most radical groups. In the conventional narrative of the era, even the "hippies" are portrayed as the vanguard of positive social change, without questioning whether a society can function when its potential leaders are "turning on and dropping out."

This mythologizing of the Sixties is not good history. The consequences of that era continue to be felt in our schools, particularly in the disintegration of adult authority and in the fear of setting limits on students' "rights." Gerald Grant's superb *The World We Created at Hamilton High* chronicles the dramatic and corrosive changes in the American high school that can be traced to the Sixties. Other excellent books—such as Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties*, Hugh Pearson's *The Shadow of the Panther*, and Thomas Powers's *Diana: The Making of a Terrorist*—tell the story of that era without sugarcoating the deeds of the radical youth who wanted to impose a social revolution.

Yet a full, accurate representation of these events is missing from the most widely used textbooks. *A History of the United States*, a fine textbook written by the late Daniel Boorstin and Brooks Mather Kelley, was in fact criticized in professional journals for its less-than-admiring treatment of the Sixties revolutionaries. Their textbook is now out of print, in part because of its allegedly old-fashioned telling of American history.

The young Sixties revolutionaries had nothing but contempt for ordinary working people.

Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left, a biography of Kathy Boudin and her comrades, is a cautionary tale that reminds us how lucky we were to escape the demented ambitions of the radical youth movements of that tumultuous era.

Boudin was one of the most famous members of her generation, but her name does not appear in any of the most widely used history textbooks. The reason is obvious: Her direct involvement in bombings and murder gives the lie to the textbooks' fawning portrayal of her generation.

Boudin grew up in a leftist milieu, surrounded by luminaries of radicalism. Her father, attorney Leonard Boudin, represented prominent radicals, including accused spy Judith Coplon, Fidel Castro, and Paul Robeson; Boudin's law partner represented Alger Hiss. Kathy's uncle, I. F. Stone, was a celebrated left-wing journalist. Her mother was a poet and self-described "parlor revolutionary." Much was made in Kathy's family of the fact that she was born on May 19, the same birthday as Malcolm X and Ho Chi Minh. The "family circle" included many famous artists, writers, and academics.

Kathy attended the parent-run progressive Downtown Community School in lower Manhattan, founded by her father and Margaret Mead; parental meetings were rocked by fights between Trotskyites and Stalinists, Stalinists and liberals. At her private progressive high school, classmates included future revolutionary Angela Davis and Michael Meeropol, son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

At Bryn Mawr, the elite women's college, Kathy created a student-run dorm to escape the dress code and parietal rules. She radicalized some fellow students, led civil-rights protests, and demanded higher wages for the dormitories' black maids (the college administration responded by phasing out the maid system, which eliminated the maids' jobs). She spent her senior year in Russia, where her leftist political views deepened.

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Heightened Radicalism

After graduation in 1965, Kathy entered a life of protest activities and community organizing among the poor. She spent time in Newark, where Tom Hayden of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was trying to forge an "interracial movement of poor people and students in northern cities." She joined a similar project in Cleveland, where she organized welfare mothers. At the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, Kathy and fellow SDS radicals planned violent clashes with the police and telephoned bomb threats to hotels. Kathy's father had to bail them out of jail. Kathy and other radicals formed the Weathermen, a group devoted to violent revolution. In his biography of Diana Oughton, Thomas Powers wrote that she and Kathy wanted to be "this country's executioners."

Boudin and her fellow well-educated, upper-middle-class revolutionaries had numerous ridiculous ideas. One that they put into practice was called "smash monogamy," which meant that no one should have an exclusive relationship with anyone and everyone should sleep with everyone. They engaged in intensive sessions of criticism and self-criticism to ward off counterrevolutionary deviations. They admired violence, especially when committed by those like the Black Panthers and Charles Manson, who were willing to kill for their beliefs, no matter how bizarre.

Then came the fateful day in 1970 when Kathy was staying in a luxurious townhouse in Greenwich Village with four friends. One busied himself in the basement, assembling a powerful bomb packed with hundreds of roofing nails so as to inflict maximum damage. Possible sites for detonation included a department store, an army base, or the Columbia University campus. But the bombmaker erred; the bomb exploded, killing him and two other revolutionaries. Only Kathy and the daughter of the townhouse owner escaped.

Kathy went underground for the next decade, advancing her cause with an occasional bombing, living in the actor Jon Voight's houseboat, finding shelter in safe houses wherever she went. In one ludicrous scene, Kathy and Bernadine Dohrn set a bomb in the ladies room of the U.S. Capitol, on behalf of the revolution. Kathy, her biographer says, found this clandestine existence "exciting." While underground, Kathy and her group managed prison breaks for Timothy Leary, the Harvard psychology professor famous for experimenting with LSD, and for Joanne Chesimard, a black radical who had participated in the murder of police officers in New Jersey.

A full, accurate representation of the Sixties is missing from widely used textbooks.

This fugitive lifestyle ended in 1981 when Kathy left her 14-month-old baby with a sitter and said she would return that afternoon. She and the child's father, fellow revolutionary David Gilbert, had agreed to drive the getaway van for a group of heavily armed bank robbers who planned to rob a Brinks truck. (The robbers claimed to be black revolutionaries but actually used proceeds from their heists to buy drugs.)

They drove to a suburban shopping mall north of New York City. While Kathy and David waited in a rented U-Haul truck, the "revolutionaries" cornered the Brinks truck and gunned down its guards, killing one of them and snatching canvas bags of money. The gang drove to the getaway van and piled into the back; the plan was that police would be looking for black robbers, not a middle-aged white couple driving a U-Haul van.

But the police did stop Kathy and David at a roadblock. Kathy got out and told the police to put down their guns. Foolishly, they did. The robbers hiding in the back of the van sprang out firing; two police officers were killed. Kathy was captured and convicted and eventually spent 20 years in prison for her role in the Brinks robbery and murders (she was released in 2003). David Gilbert got a life sentence.

One reads this book with a sense of disbelief that men and women who led such privileged lives could have been so stupid and hateful, could have thought themselves revolutionaries acting on behalf of "the people" when they had nothing but contempt for ordinary working people. Encountering their petulance, their hatred of democratic institutions, and their isolation from reality, one can only imagine the terror they would have inflicted if given the opportunity.

Surely these are lessons that our own children should study when learning about the 1960s.

Diane Ravitch is a research professor at New York University and a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution.

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The Newest Americans

Integrating the great Hispanic migration

Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity

By Samuel P. Huntington

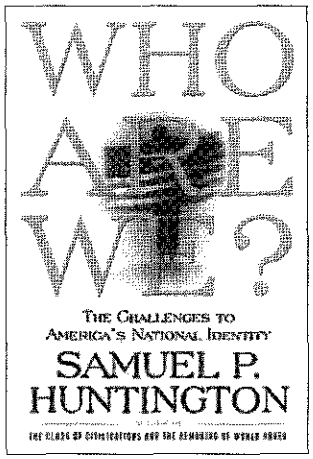
Simon & Schuster, 2004, $27; 428 pages.

Reviewed by Nathan Glazer

Samuel P. Huntington's earlier, prescient work, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, shaped much of the discourse on international conflict in the post–Cold War world. Now, in *Who Are We?* Huntington turns his attention toward what might be termed a domestic clash of civilizations—or at least a clash of cultures.

Huntington's central concern is that 35 years of heavy migration has established a large Hispanic population in the United States that is substantially different from earlier immigrant groups. He asserts that Hispanics are geographically more concentrated—in California, the Southwest, and Florida—than their predecessors, many living in states that border Mexico. In these enclaves, they retain many aspects of Mexican culture and assimilate into American society at a slower rate than previous ethnic groups did; Mexican-Americans have been relatively slow to become citizens, and their children continue to underperform academically. Furthermore, the large group of Hispanic immigrants who came to America from Mexico has the unique feature of emigrating to lands that were once part of their native country—and were acquired by the United States through conquest.

These attributes, Huntington argues, have combined to make Hispanics less likely to adopt American values and American culture, especially in a nation whose elites have embraced a multicultural ideology that makes assimilation ever more difficult. To Huntington, these factors suggest the possibility of a second Spanish-speaking nation within the United States that is at odds with the dominant American culture.



The debates over bilingual education and multiculturalism are evidence of a nation's struggle to define itself in the face of a shifting population.

Thus far, schools have served as the main battlefield in this potential clash of cultures. The debates over bilingual education, multicultural curricula, and textbook accounts of American history are evidence of a nation's struggle to define itself in the face of a shifting population. However, *Who Are We?* does not have much direct discussion of education issues; Huntington more or less assumes the victory of a patriotism-reducing multiculturalism in the schools and worries about its consequences.

The American Creed

Huntington does not criticize the scale of immigration per se—at least not directly. Nor does he bemoan—again, at least not directly—the changing racial and ethnic composition of America. Instead, he argues that the values brought to America by the new wave of Hispanic immigration represent a challenge to the values established by the original Anglo-Protestant settlers as the core of America's national identity.

That identity, Huntington believes, is based on a set of ideas—a unique American creed that people of any race or ethnicity can adopt. Yet, he writes, that creed "was the product of the distinct Anglo-Protestant culture of the founding settlers of the 17th and 18th centuries. Key elements of that culture include: the English language; Christianity; religious commitment; English concepts of the rule of law, the responsibility of rulers, and the rights of individuals; and dissenting Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth."

Despite the clear association of Huntington's creed with Anglo-Protestants, he is careful to make it clear that he does not want to resuscitate race and ethnicity as the foundation of America's identity; he writes that his argument is "for the importance of Anglo-Protestant

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culture, not Anglo-Protestant people." But he no longer seems to think—as he stated in a 1981 book—that a common commitment to the political values enshrined in the Constitution can serve as the basis of American identity. "People are not likely to find in political principle," Huntington writes, "the deep emotional content provided by kith and kin, blood and belonging, culture and nationality"—an argument that, of course, comes perilously close to resurrecting race and ethnicity.

The question is, Are Mexican-American values so different from "Anglo-Protestant" values as to pose a problem? At one point, Huntington quotes a Mexican-American arguing that Hispanics are indeed different. Huntington writes, "Lionel Sosa, a successful Texas Mexican-American businessman, in 1998 hailed the emerging Hispanic middle-class professionals who look like Anglos, but whose 'values remain quite different from an Anglo's.'" But if we were to inquire into the nature of those values, I bet we would hear reference to family, church, community, and the like. And how different would that be from Anglo-Protestant values? It is common for ethnic groups to proclaim that their values are distinctive, just as their mothers are *sui generis*. But when they are asked to articulate the differences, the values and the mothers turn out to be very similar.

Talking about culture and religion is a tricky business. If we take Anglo-Protestantism as the root of American national identity, we have to consider European Catholicism, which we all consider fully assimilated into whatever the American identity may be. Huntington argues that Catholicism has been "Protestantized" in America. But then why the problem with Mexican-Americans, who are largely Catholic? At one point, Huntington notes: "Unquestionably, a most significant manifestation of assimilation is the conversion of Hispanic immigrants to evangelical Protestantism." Here the head reels. Is Huntington suggesting that to remain Catholic is to remain unassimilated, but to become evangelical Protestant is to become more assimilated?

But the evangelical Protestantism to which many Hispanics are attracted is deeply rooted in their distinctive homeland experience. It shows strong growth in Latin America; thus converting to evangelical Protestantism means accepting religious leaders who are far less "assimilated" than American Catholics. Catholicism opens Mexicans to the influence of the American hierarchy and American priests—in short, to the influence of American culture. Here Huntington's commitment to the Protestant roots of American identity leads him into confusion.

The capacity of America to change people, to make them Americans, is undiminished.

In general, Huntington overestimates the place of religion—specifically Christianity, and more specifically Protestantism—in American identity today. Certainly Protestantism played a key role in shaping American values. But origins are overtaken by subsequent events, and in a changing society they do not maintain the same role they played in shaping it. Nor does the current political weight of evangelical Protestantism change the fact that our political and constitutional development has pretty much reduced religion to a private matter, even if there remain energetic efforts to make religious concerns play a larger role in public affairs. I do not see why a book asking, "Who are we?" should conclude with a chapter on the role of religion.

Huntington is right to argue that our legal and political system, and in large measure our culture, were defined by the original settlers from England, not by later immigrants. We are not quite a melting pot, but neither are we—to continue the culinary metaphor, as Huntington labels the melting pot (though it originally referred to the smelting of metals)—a salad of distinct components, each maintaining its difference, as multiculturalists would have it. Huntington proposes "tomato soup" as his culinary metaphor for U.S. culture: The immigrants have added "celery, croutons, spices, parsley, and other ingredients that enrich and diversify the taste, but which are absorbed into what remains fundamentally tomato soup."

However, Huntington fears that we are getting much closer to the salad—and that some elements of the salad are going to concentrate in one area of the bowl, separating themselves from the rest. No one can predict how matters will turn out: We are still in the midst of the huge immigration wave that began to pick up in the 1960s, and we do not see what circumstances might lead to its diminution. That is indeed a problem. But Huntington is too alarmist in his expectations, as when he writes, "If each year a million Mexican soldiers attempted to invade the United States and more than 150,000

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of them succeeded, established themselves on American territory, and the Mexican government then demanded that the United States recognize the legality of this invasion...." Well, even illegal immigration is not quite like that.

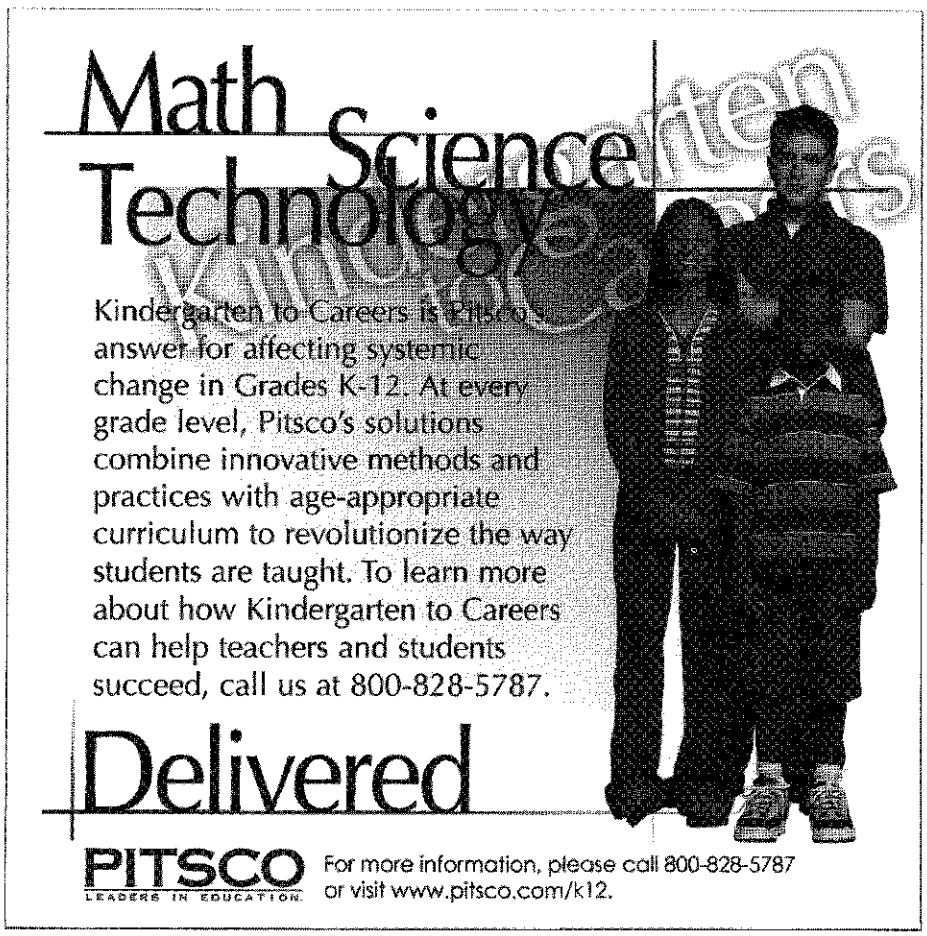
Fears very similar to those Huntington expresses were raised about the Irish Catholic immigrants of the 1840s, about German immigrants, Italian immigrants, Jewish immigrants, Slavic immigrants, and so on. These fears have proved groundless. Despite Huntington's thorough presentation of the evidence, I am not convinced that the research shows that the process of assimilation—in particular, the acquisition of language and improvements in student achievement—is proceeding any slower among second- and third-generation Mexican-Americans than it did among other immigrants from peasant and village and small-town backgrounds.

Equally groundless fears were raised about Irish Catholic, German, Italian, Jewish, and Slavic immigrants.

True, today's American immigrants enter a much different cultural environment than did past waves. The celebration of diversity, acceptance of multiculturalism, and the more modest place of patriotism and nationalism all make assimilation a different, if not necessarily more difficult, process. But is the assimilatory process fatally damaged as, for instance, American schools begin to recognize minority heroes and tell the stories of past discrimination? Here it is important to remember that the changes that so concern Huntington are motivated more by the demands of African-Americans and the need to better integrate them than by concern over immigrant minorities. To date the content of American education has been more profoundly affected by the nation's most enduring internal division than by immigrants from abroad, then or now, Hispanic or Asian.

Huntington has written a brief for a possibility. It would stand to reason that Mexican-Americans, so different from other immigrant groups, should encounter greater difficulties and pose greater problems. But matters that stand to reason have to be tested on the ground. This past Memorial Day, the *New York Times* published a picture of a grieving Dominican mother. Her son had been killed in Iraq, and his comrades had sent her a Dominican flag they had all signed. One assumes that the son, who was granted American citizenship posthumously, had been carrying it. Multiculturalism run amok? Perhaps. But I think that assimilation is becoming a different matter from what it was, at a time when our ideas of citizenship, patriotism, and sovereignty are all undergoing surprising changes. But I also think the capacity of America to change people, to make them Americans, is undiminished. It is simply being done in different ways, and it is making rather different Americans.

Nathan Glazer is a professor emeritus of education at Harvard University and the author of We Are All Multiculturalists Now *(Harvard University Press).*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BOOK ALERT

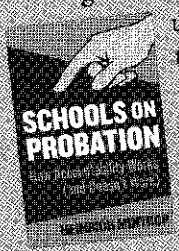
Battling Corruption in America's Public Schools, by Lydia G. Segal (Northeastern). This worthy book by Segal, an attorney and professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University of New York, is a companion to *Making Schools Work*, which she co-authored with UCLA business professor William Ouchi. Based on research in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, Segal exposes "systemic waste" and "embedded fraud" in the operations of those urban school systems. Some of the waste is illegal; much is simply stupid, the costly consequence of a bureaucratic, rule-bound, procedure-obsessed system in which everything becomes pricier and less efficient than it should be.

Segal offers solutions that track the prescriptions of *Making Schools Work*: radically decentralizing control over operations and budgets to individual schools while monitoring them with a variety of performance-based measures. Wise and timely counsel.

After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation, by Charles T. Clotfelter (Princeton). The rate of school desegregation has been charted for many years by the Harvard Civil Rights Project. Combining this information with data from other sources, Clotfelter provides detailed, authoritative information on changes in the racial composition of schools and colleges over the decades.

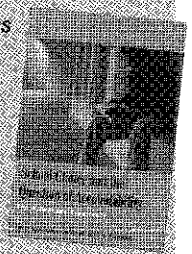
Despite the book's subtitle, the author, in a fascinating set of findings, reports progress in colleges, private schools, and public schools. Most surprising, he reports that segregation in metropolitan-area public schools attenuated noticeably between 1970 and 2000 across the country and especially in the South. Segregation within school districts fell quite dramatically. However, these gains were partially offset by an increase in racial separation between school districts.

Schools on Probation: How Accountability Works (and Doesn't Work), by Heinrich Mintrop (Teachers College). The author explores how accountability systems "really" work through extensive study of seven Maryland schools and four Kentucky schools that were put on probation under their state accountability systems. The volume is rich with interview and survey data, some of it quite illuminating. Mintrop finds that teachers in low-performing schools are initially upset by negative state evaluations, but that they quickly learn to live with the label and even to interpret it as a signal that they need more resources or more talented students.



It's not clear which is more disheartening, the rationalizations that Mintrop sympathetically catalogues or his failure to recognize that any accountability system generates resistance from workers—and that this resistance is overcome by making sanctions concrete and relentless, not by discovering a way to render them unobjectionable. Ultimately, Mintrop settles for advocating more attention to developing "capacity" (always a safe bet) and "meaning," arguing that accountability systems can work only if they connect with teachers' prevailing sense of responsibility and the established culture of teaching. However, it is unclear what Mintrop would have us do in those thousands of mediocre schools where the sense of responsibility is atrophied or the culture of teaching is weak—the very schools that accountability systems target.

School Choice and the Question of Accountability: The Milwaukee Experience, by Emily Van Dunk and Anneliese M. Dickman (Yale). Parents do not know much about the schools of Milwaukee, these authors contend. And Milwaukee's public schools lost money when some of their students took vouchers. To fix things, the authors argue, rigid accountability systems need to be put into place.



The writers are earnest, but this misguided book ignores basic principles of economics and accounting. If we were to apply the authors' claims about schooling to the car industry, we would have to conclude that only expert drivers benefited when the Japanese successfully challenged Detroit's monopoly on auto production. What's more, we would have to shell out money to Detroit so the automakers could be compensated for the cars they did not produce.

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by LEONARD A. SLADE JR.

The Days Before *Brown*

Growing up in segregated schools

During the early 1950s, in the era before *Brown v. Board of Education*, I attended W. S. Creecy High School in Rich Square, North Carolina. Because of the state's segregated school system, W. S. Creecy's students were all black.

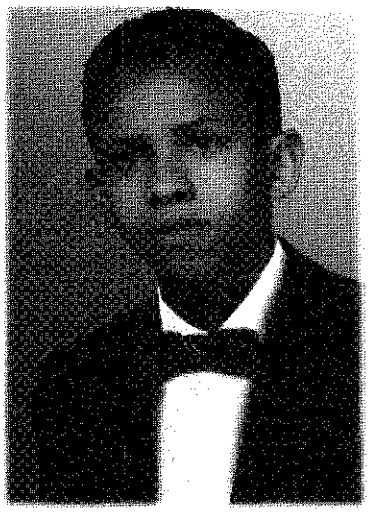
W. S. Creecy was separate from but certainly not equal to the all-white schools in Rich Square. The school enjoyed less funding than the all-white schools, meaning that our teachers earned lower salaries and that money for lab equipment and other facilities was scarce. Each teacher had to put the funds that were available to their best use. Thus our equipment and books were not substandard; we simply needed more of them in order to bolster the curriculum.

I still remember the county's school superintendent, who was white, being accused of embezzlement. He denied the allegation but committed suicide. The word was that he had stolen money from the county's black schools in order to build his palatial house.

Nevertheless, W. S. Creecy was blessed with an abundance of teaching talent. Our teachers often held master's degrees, perhaps because teaching was the only profession open to educated blacks at the time. The discrimination they faced was our gain; they were excellent teachers who inspired us to go to college and beyond. Most of the students in my graduating class earned bachelor's degrees. All students had to pass courses in the traditional core curriculum, designed to prepare us for college; we did not have electives, as many students do today.

My teachers were my role models. Mr. W. S. Creecy Jr., the principal, also taught me economics and sociology. (The school was named for his father, who had served as the previous principal.) Mr. Creecy and Mrs. Theola Moore, my English teacher, urged me to pursue further studies. Their standards were rigorous, and they recognized my potential.

My high school was reduced to a middle school in the 1970s, as black and white students merged into one large high school. Some white students, rather than study with black students in an integrated high school, chose to attend private academies, which still exist today.



Our teachers often held master's degrees, perhaps because teaching was the only profession open to educated blacks at the time.

I wonder how my parents were able to send nine children to college during those days of segregation. They had adjusted to segregation before I was born. They never let hardships or inequality prevent them from pursuing their dreams for themselves and their children. With a strong spiritual base (we went to church every Sunday) and with tremendous respect for the work ethic, Mom and Dad were determined that their children's lives would be better than their own. At one point, they had three of us in college at the same time. They made sacrifices, not excuses. They expected us to study hard and to do our best.

I remember plowing behind a mule, chopping cotton on our farm (which Dad paid for in three years), feeding the hogs, picking cotton, harvesting peanuts and corn, cleaning my room every morning, studying hard late at night, and making the honor roll in school.

Segregation oppressed us in North Carolina. Despite, or perhaps due to, the disadvantages of attending a segregated high school, students were determined to excel. Hardships can build character. The trials, tribulations, and rebuffs enabled me to be self-motivated and to become a true professional. The beauty of living in America is that we can all learn from our mistakes. Our country continues to make right our wrongs. As Langston Hughes once said, "I too, sing America," because "I, too am America."

Leonard A. Slade Jr. is professor and chair of the department of Africana studies at the State University of New York at Albany.

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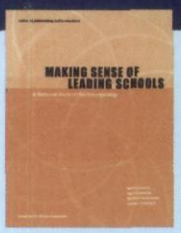
Rolling Up Their Sleeves: Superintendents and Principals Talk About What's Needed to Fix Public Schools

Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson, Ann Duffett
Public Agenda (2003)

This survey of 1,931 superintendents and principals reveals that they are focused as never before on curriculum, instruction and mentoring to improve classroom teaching, but feel hamstrung by red tape and inadequate resources to meet growing mandates.



Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship

Bradley Portin, Paul Schneider, Michael DeArmond, Lauren Gundlach
Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington (2003)

This survey of educators in schools makes clear that there is a variety of leadership styles, and a one-size-fits-all approach in recruiting, training and assigning principals is counterproductive.

Other recommended reading from The Wallace Foundation:

Beyond the Pipeline: Getting the Principals We Need, Where They Are Needed Most
Lee Mitgang
The Wallace Foundation (2003)

From Bystander to Ally: Transforming the District Human Resources Department
Christine Campbell, Michael DeArmond, Abigail Schumwinger
Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington (2004)

Leading for Learning: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders
Michael S. Knapp, Michael A. Copland, Joan E. Talbert
Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington (2003)

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